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THE NILE WITHOUT A DRAGOMAN.

THE NILE
WITHOUT A DRAGOMAN.

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ac.

BY

FREDERIC EDEN

London:
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1871

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TO

GEORGE POULETT SCROPE, F.R.S., F.G.S.,

AS AN EXPRESSION

OF AFFECTION

FROM HIS NEPHEW.

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THE NILE WITHOUT A DRAGOMAN.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

In the spring of 1869, I received my doctor's orders to go to Bad Gastein. Chilled by the cold, and wearied by the length of the preceding winter, my wife and I resolved to shirk the following one, or, at least, to pass it in some southern climate.

Tired of the Riviera, and knowing how very cold Italy can be, our thoughts turned longingly to the Nile. That we were forced to cross the half of Europe seemed an excellent reason for traversing the other moiety; and besides, for a sick man, there were two tempting water-routes from the Tyrol to Egypt. The one, down the Danube, viâ Constantinople; the other, by Venice and Brindisi. Before setting out on such a journey, however, it was necessary to count the cost, and to have more information respecting the advantages and drawbacks offered by the Nile to small people than we could gather from Dr. Russell's letters to the *Times*. So we bought and studied "Murray's Handbook to Egypt," and made inquiries among our friends. The result was sufficiently disheartening. Murray, admirable in

knowledge of Egypt 4000 years ago, told us all an antiquary could reasonably wish to know of the ancient kings, the order of their succession, the things that they did, and the temples that they built; but was despairingly vague as to present prices, and the state of affairs existing. Such estimates as he gave were deterringly high; and as we had been told that the chief food of Upper Egypt was turkeys, the 81 piastres (8*s.*) he named as the price of an average one was not reassuring. Our private information, too, pointed in the same direction.

The dahabeah necessary for a voyage up the Nile would cost from £100 to £200 a month, and a dragoman might be found to feed us at £2 per head per diem—that is to say, in ordinary years; but in this, 1869, the pasha's world-wide invitation to see the opening of the Suez canal would so fill Egypt that prices would be far higher than usual. We fortunately, however, applied to an acquaintance who had passed many years in Alexandria, and had but lately quitted it. With the greatest good nature, he answered all our inquiries, and offered us the dahabeah he had left behind him. We hired her at the price his agent had had instructions, previous to our application, to ask; and, thanks to the constant kindness of these two gentlemen, we were able to pass from the steamer which brought us to Alexandria directly into [redacted]r boat.

[redacted]e must be many invalids to whom a winter in the

almost perfect climate of Upper Egypt would be of much benefit. There must be still more to whom to change the cold and damp, the constant variation and fatiguing length, of an English winter, for the warmth, light, and open-air life of the same season in Egypt, would be an almost unmixed gain—to whom the change of habits, the novelty of the scene, and the absence of papers, letters, and business, would be the best of tonics, mental and physical. All of these may not care to travel *en prince;* none may have the advantage we happily possessed of a friend behind the scenes, and it is to aid, if perchance we may be able so to do, some one or more who may wish to pass a winter on the Nile that these pages, written at the time for our amusement, are now published. Our object is to give, by the narration of our own experiences, that information it is so difficult to obtain upon even the most ordinary thing that one desires or is compelled to do in a manner at all unusual. Nothing is easier than for a rich man to go to Cairo and to engage a dragoman. By signing a single written contract, all trouble as to what he shall eat, drink, see, or pay, where he shall sleep or go, will then be taken off his hands. The same useful personage will, as a rule, with more or less accuracy, answer his every question on every subject. The class are, as far as I have heard, very intelligent and honest—tried by the standard of the East. They are always obliging, with due regard, of course, to their own interest, and liberal in fulfilment of their contracts.

But, as may be expected, their charges are ridiculously high, and with many everything yields to the desire to make the best of their bargain. Still, as I have said, they are most useful. Couriers of the East, they smooth all difficulties, and stand between the traveller and nearly all annoyances. If their information is not always correct, nothing that I know of in Egypt is; and if they are a little greedy themselves, they do a great deal to protect their master from the rapacity of others.

But it is not given to all men to enjoy such luxuries as couriers and dragomans, and we hope to show in these pages how they in Egypt may be dispensed with. With that view we shall add to the account of our inland voyage lists of such provisions and other articles of outfit as we found useful, if not necessary. We shall endeavour to give such information as we sought for in London before starting, and as many details as we think may be of service to those who venture on "the Nile without a dragoman."

CHAPTER II.

ALEXANDRIA.

TIMING our start from Venice so as to avoid the crowd rushing to the opening of the Suez Canal, we took our passage by the steamer, viâ Brindisi, which was due at Alexandria just too late for the commencement of the viceroy's fêtes. Our vessel, *Il Principe Carignano*, knife-like in shape, was *molto agile*, as one of her officers told us, in behaviour. The weather was bad, and she did not belie her character. All miseries, however, come to an end, and we reached our port on the 19th November.

As soon as I came on deck; and before there was time to take in and wonder at the sight, at first so striking, of a motley Eastern throng, a note was put into my hand. The bearer was an intelligent-looking little man, with *crêpé* hair and a smooth face. He was dressed in a fez, bright blue embroidered cloth jacket, white embroidered Greek waiscoat, and trousers of calico, spotlessly white, most voluminous in folds, and tight at the ankles. He was the Egyptian servant of M. B., the French gentleman who acted as agent for our dahabeah, and who, having undertaken to help us on our way, well fulfilled his offer. M. B. arriving immediately afterwards, we landed at the custom-house, and made acquaintance with Egyptian officials.

There is a terrible sameness in the world. Everything passed as it might have done at any European port, except perhaps that our detention was less long than usual, and that our five-franc pieces, openly expected, were given without disguise. On passing European custom-houses, it may sometimes be expedient, but it is not necessary to give; but he who enters Egypt without money in his hand will see his effects pass a bad quarter of an hour: the officials have the right of search, and they exercise it. We had nothing but our clothes with us, nothing of any kind contraband, and so our ten francs were graciously received, and ourselves and goods most obligingly passed. After a row with a gang of porters, in all kinds of costume, carried on in a dozen dialects, during which, by the care taken of us, we were able to appear only as an amused audience, we pushed into a couple of carriages, and set out for the Mamoodéëh Canal.

Our way took us through Alexandria, a cosmopolitan city of French houses, Italian villas, Turkish lattice-windowed buildings, and native mud hovels, where every tongue is commonly spoken, and every coin is in current circulation. A city of extremes and contrasts. Deluged in winter by rain and at times even pinched by cold, it is annually scorched for five months by a fierce sun, dusted by desert sand, and parched by drought. Excellent European shops of all descriptions stand amongst Eastern coffee-houses and bazaars. Inhabited by men of all nations, a fancy ball could scarce produce a more incongruous crowd than

that which fills its streets. English and Greek sailors jostle their way through a throng of Italian and French merchants, German mechanics, Maltese servants, Turkish and Egyptian women, donkeys with their boy-masters, and camels with their Arab drivers. More beautiful women may be seen in it in a day than anywhere out of London, and others, poor things! more ugly and squalid than any even London can produce. There passes a carriage full of Greeks who contradict ones insular prejudices in favour of English beauty, and there an artificial product of the Boulevards is knocked by a donkey off her high heels into a puddle. And what puddles! In this, the old part of the town, there is no road properly speaking, and no pathway. Man, woman, or beast, each takes the way which offers, and makes the best of the open space. The road was once, like everything in Egypt, well, even prodigally, made, and then left to take take care of itself. After the manner of roads, it gave unevenly, and the weak parts had become quagmires, the strong, rocks. The ruts were not ruts, but rather chains of ponds filled with mud which was water, and with water which was mud. Between the ponds the remnants of the old road served as embankments, and at each moment our carriage hauled painfully up one of these, poised itself dripping at the top before making another plunge into the sea below. Bad, however, as was the road, the scene was so novel and amusing that we were almost sorry to rumble through the gate of the fortifica-

tions out into our first palm plantation. Passing a very pretty garden and the cemetery, a little more jolting brought us to the canal, and there lay our boat and home for the next five months.

The first glance at her was an anxious one, and the result a little dispiriting. She looked very small, she was in some disorder, and her crew were huddled together on the bank under a tent extemporised to shelter them from the pitiless storms, between two of which we had landed. The background of the picture was even less promising. There are probably few bits of the earth uglier than the one on which we stood. The canal there makes a bend so that only so much is seen as will make a pond, the whole ugliness of whose flat mud-banks, muddy water, and surrounding mud huts is forced upon one by the necessity of looking at it. Its dirt, damp, and cold, its squalor and poverty were all there, and one could not look over or beyond, for there was nothing else to see. We went into our cabin; M. B., whose time pressed, left us. The rain began again, and we sat down among our unpacked goods and unknown servants.

But hunger soon roused us to action, and we called for the cook, who had just been pointed out to us. Girghis (*anglice*, George) had not been well-treated by nature, nor did he possess the art or taste to make the least of his disadvantages. His bullet-shaped head, and lank, lustreless brown hair, was covered by a tarboosh, not too new, round which was twisted a white and red cotton

handkerchief, not too clean. Large black eyes that shone in the dark, if ever eyes so shone, and a shapeless coarse mouth, gave him a cruel animal appearance that much misrepresented the man. A dirty brown cloth jacket, the worse for wear, and none the better for his recent donkey ride to Alexandria; a waistcoat whose embroidery was worn and buttons defective, trousers of the butcher-boy blue colour and texture, with Blucher boots innocent from their birth of blacking, completed, with the help of a red sash and a few inches of Girghis' between trousers and Bluchers, his not too inviting appearance. But we were hungry, and asked what we could have for breakfast, putting our question in English, of which we had been told he understood enough to receive in it his orders. His answer was, "Yes, ma'am," given with the purest London accent. Again and again we tried to make our wants known, but it was an unusual hour for eating, Girghis was not happy at guessing, and I had to reinforce my English by pantomime. This was easy, but not so to get his reply as to the state of the larder; so we called Ibrahim, our soffraghee or table servant. *His* European language was Italian, and as he knew at least a dozen words, and always pretended that he understood whatever was said to him, Girghis was soon sent to the galley. Ibrahim was a tall ill-made native of Sioot. Hair and lips of the negro type, weak eyes, a sunken chest, enormous knees that no bagginess of trowsers could conceal, splay feet that no slippers could confine, with

a general ungainliness of figure and motion, harmonised ill with the swagger and assumption of his manner. But enough of Ibrahim for the present; unfortunately we shall have more to say of him later on.

Breakfast over, our first care was to examine the boat. A dahabeah has generally fine lines and a very handsome shape; she is built of wood as a rule, but not rarely of iron. Her sides are low, her beam is great, and her draught light. In one respect her form is peculiar, for the bow is much deeper in the water than the stern. The older boats have a considerable sheer, the stern especially cocking up high out of water, but the newer ones are flatter.

She is furnished with four means of progression, viz., sails, punting-poles, tow-rope, and oars. The first three are used almost exclusively on the voyage up, and the oars on the voyage down. Her sails, two in number, are lateen. The trinkeet, or forward sail, is of great size, the yard on which it is laced being as long, and sometimes longer, than the hull of the boat itself. The ballakoon, or after sail, is small, bearing to the foresail much the same proportion as the dandy of a yawl has to its mainsail. Into the after part of the dahabeah is built a wooden house, which sometimes fills nearly half the boat; and the size of a distant dahabeah may be easily told by the number, six or eight, nine or ten, of the Venetian-blinded windows with which the sides of the house are pierced. Inside are the cabins; outside, on the roof, the deck where the

Nile travellers' time is almost entirely spent. Two or three steps from the cabin's floor, which is in fact the floor of the boat itself, lead up on to the maindeck, and from this a staircase, or in large boats two, one on each side, gives access to the deck above. Three fourths of the maindeck are made of movable bars or planks that are taken up when the oars are used; and it is under this part of the deck that packages and cases are stored. The oars on the return voyage, when not in use, are lashed along the sides, each to its pin; but on going up they generally serve as a rail round the upper deck, being fastened rail-wise to iron uprights fixed for the support of the awning. Round the mast are ranged the punting-poles, that play no second-rate part in a Nile voyage; and immediately in front of it is the cook's galley. Every part of the boat from stem to stern is fitted with awnings. Canvas is the only roof ever given to the kitchen; it closes in, when required, the sides of the main deck and of the cabins. It roofs them in also, and affords every possible protection from the sun. In the tents so made the crew sleep: the men on the main deck, the reis, or captain, and one or two others on the upper deck; and in them on every day of rest the men hold feast and holiday. So swathed in her awnings is a dahabeah on such an occasion, that as little can be seen of her as of a racehorse in his clothes.

The *Lotus*, a very small boat, was about 53 feet long by 10 feet broad. She had three cabins and a closet, opening one into the other. The main cabin, most amidships,

was 8 feet 3 inches broad, 6 feet 6 inches long, and 6 feet 6 inches high; the other two were of the same length and height, but narrowing with the curve of the vessel. Large dahabeahs, indeed all that we saw excepting ours, have a passage down the middle leading aft from the main cabin. On either side are the sleeping cabins, often necessarily very narrow. Our boat, having no passage, afforded us better sleeping accommodation than we should have had in a vessel twice as large; but the main cabin was small. Divans on either side of each cabin, and an infinity of lockers, drawers, and shelves, turned the space, however, to the best account, and for two people the little boat was very comfortable. Going out of the cabin on to the main deck, on one side was the staircase to the upper deck, on the other the pantry; and in front, by the mast, stood the filter—a large goolah jar, set in a green wooden case. These jars are of earth, very porous, and consequently cooling.

On the upper deck stand chairs, and divans, and perhaps a table. It can, as I have said, be completely surrounded and covered in by awnings, and a handsome Persian carpet is often spread upon it. The forewarder part is in fact a day-room, used by the owners more than is the main cabin. From the afterpart the boat is steered, and it is more or less abandoned to the reis, steersman, and the poultry. Our boat, however, had a ginnayn, or garden, as the five or six feet of extreme stern, sometimes not occupied by the cabins is called, from the

habit that prevails in the native boats of placing here one or more pots of flowers, generally cactuses. We found our garden most useful. From it the ballakoon was worked, and in it our chicken coops were ranged.

Such is the best description I can give of the travelling Nile-boat; and a more graceful boat, or one better suited for its purpose, it would be hard to find. The fine lines and immense sails give it the power requisite to stem the rapid current of the Nile. The lateen cut of these sails spreads the canvas high above the shelter of the oftentimes deep banks. The great beam gives stability and accommodation. The light draught makes her easy to tow, and, for so large a boat, easy also to row. Thereby, too, she has a better chance of escaping the numerous sandbanks; and as she strikes them with her deepest part, the bow, she is more easily got afloat again. The low freeboard, only about two feet from the waterline, adds to her lightness in fact and appearance; whilst her long pennants, gaily painted sides, and white canvas, bordered often by one or two cloths of blue, give the boat a most picturesque and holiday-like look. Near or at a distance, a dahabeah is fair to see. Near, she is a picture of comfort and convenience, of adaptability of means to an end. In all things a perfect boat-home. At a distance she resembles a bird on the wing rather than a boat on the water.

Our first day on board, however, was by no means an agreeable one: bad weather kept us in the cabins, and

the horrors of unpacking had to be endured in a very small space. It was novel to see the servants, and even one of the crew whom we sent with a message, start for Alexandria on donkeys (nobody in this country will go half a mile on foot if he can help it); and it was sufficiently amusing to see their return and the donkey-carried provisions. But it was by no means fun trying to settle accounts afterwards with men who did not understand us, and whom we did not understand; more especially as Ibrahim, who understood us best, was determined for his own purposes to do so but little. It was evident that one was a rascal, if not both; and if they would cheat us at Alexandria, where we were among friends, what would they do when we got up the country.

The next morning we saw M. B., and asked if it was not possible to get better servants, or at least one who would have some language in common with us. He most kindly went through the account of the day before, and pointed out the items which were excessive, and those which were only high. The chickens for instance were too dear, and a franc was worth eight piastres, not seven; but it was clearly exorbitant to reckon the penny egg-cups at a franc apiece. Somebody was not quite honest, nevertheless it was better to keep the men we had got: to change would occasion delay; servants were this year most difficult to find, owing to the great influx of foreigners. In a short time they would understand us better. Could we learn some Arabic? No, that was

scarcely possible, but Ibrahim had some Italian, and would find it if we proved ourselves his masters; and if we changed, we might not do so for the better. *On peut bien changer un borgne pour un boiteux.* After giving this advice, M. B. made us a list of the prices current both in Upper and Lower Egypt, of a number of things in common use—such as eggs, chickens, mutton, and turkeys; and he counselled us to make the most of this information, and where it failed, to follow Ibrahim's example, and to act as if it was all-sufficient. The advice was good, and we took it thankfully.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIT OUT.

THE next two days were spent in fitting out and victualling the ship. The donkeys came and went without cessation. Girghis spent the morning in buying a beefsteak for luncheon, and the afternoon in finding a chicken and some fish for dinner. C. rode in on a donkey, followed by Ibrahim on another, and came back in a carriage full of odds and ends, with Ibrahim on the box. I passed the time on board with the one or two of the crew who were not at the coffee-shops, and took from them my first lessons in Arabic.

It is no easy thing to fit out for a voyage into a strange land for those whose housekeeping experiences have been hitherto made with butchers, bakers, and grocers in the next street. Murray gives, in his "Handbook to Egypt," a good deal of information, but he does not give much that one also wants to know. For the vast majority of English travellers, who have a dragoman, such details are of no importance. It is the dragoman's business to find a sufficiency of all supplies, and to know what will and what will not be required. We had to do our own work, and it was not a very simple task. All difficulty could, it was true, be got over by taking everything in large quantities; but this was not an economic solution of the

problem. We had, therefore, made some time before a list of the things we should, as we thought, certainly require, calculated the quantities probably necessary, and had ordered them to be sent from England per Peninsular and Oriental steamer. This list we now supplemented by purchases at Alexandria; and we give the outfit in detail, for the benefit of any reader who may start, as we did, on the Nile without a dragoman.

Arrowroot	2 lbs.
Barley, pearl	8 lbs.
Biscuits—	
2 tins Albert's	2-lb. tins.
2 tins digestive do.	
4 tins captain	
4 tins cabin	
2 tins brown college	
2 tins spice nuts	
Bacon in tins	18 lbs.
Bath chops	2.
Butter	4 5-lb. jars.
Paraffin candles	30 lbs.
Composite do., for lanterns	20 lbs.
Capers	1 pint.
Chutnee	2½ pints.
Currie powder	1 pint bottle.
Cheese	10 lbs.
Extractum Carnis (Liebig)	8 ¼-lb. jars.
Hams	2 small.
Jams and jellies—	
12 assorted jams	1-lb. jars.
Red currant jelly	2 1-lb. jars.
Dundee marmalade	12 1-lb. tins.
Preserved Meats—	
Beef, mutton, and jugged hare	18 1 & 2-lb. tins.
Mustard	1-lb. tin.
French do.	1 small jar.

Scotch oatmeal	3 4-lb. tins.
Olives, French	2 pint bottles.
Oil, salad...	2 pint bottles.
Pepper	1-lb. bottle.
Peas, split	1 7-lb. tin.
Soups	30 1-lb. tins.
Preserved Vegetables—Green peas	18 1-lb. tins.
Macedoines (mixed vegetables)	18 1-lb. tins.
Harvey sauce...	2 ½-pint bottles.
Soap	12 tablets.
Starch, Glenfield	1 4-lb. tin.
Tongues	4.
Tea	6 lbs.
Vinegar, raspberry	6 ½-pint bottles.

The provisions enumerated above were amply sufficient for ourselves and two servants, for a voyage that lasted nearly five months. There was more than enough, indeed, of some of the items, as, for instance, the biscuits; whilst others were nearly useless, *e.g.*, the preserved meats. Still the biscuits were a most welcome small "backshish" to our crew (An Arab is a perfect child, and loves something to eat, especially something that is new.), and the tinned beef and mutton made us independent of markets, and so enabled us to upset a dozen little plots of our people to stop for provisions at this or that village when they wished for a halt. The great proportion of our stores were sent, as I have said, from London; and for those who can despatch them sufficiently beforehand, such a plan is the best. One is certain that the provisions will be good. The freight is ridiculously cheap. But it is not necessary to be so provident, for at the shops in Alexandria would be found everything asked for; and

some things will, of course, be bought better there than in England, as flour, coffee, rice, macaroni, sugar, and common soap. The two last indeed may be bought everywhere.

Wine may also, be bought of every description at Alexandria. But I was not lucky enough to get any Bordeaux either there or at Cairo. The wines sent us came not from the Medoc but from the Grave and Rhone districts. In laying in a supply, it should be remembered that the climate of Egypt requires light wines. I did not use half as much there as in England; the wine I drank was invariably mixed with sodawater, and I thirsted for a light Rhine wine, for the Austrian Mailberger or Gumpoldskirchner, or, better still, the light white Tisch wine one finds at Pesth, and drinks on the Lower Danube. We bought at Alexandria a sodawater-making machine, and it was a very great comfort; but the drink of drinks on the Nile is the native stimulant, coffee. Both at Cairo and Alexandria most excellent coffee may be obtained; the green berry of Cairo has the highest repute, but we preferred the Alexandrian. The coffee of the East is a very different beverage from the decoction as a rule put up with in England. The berry is of much finer quality; and pounded, not ground; the coffee is made in two or three minutes, and served, grounds and all. The first day or two we were disposed to find fault with the thick potion; but the fine flavour and happy absence of the oily bitter

taste that is produced by slow making, and is so frequently found in European coffee, soon reconciled us to the unaccustomed grits; and before ten days were over, we surprised each other eating these very grits with a spoon, in true Arab fashion. So excellent is the coffee, and so sympathetic with the climate, that we drank too much of it, and found it necessary for health's sake to abandon our European cups for native ones of egg-shell size, and even to limit these in number.

To be in a well-provisioned ship adds, no doubt, greatly to one's comfort, but one is by no means dependent upon the stores taken on board. At all the large towns on the river bank weekly markets are held, and we constantly stopped for them, as much for the amusement as for the supplies they afforded.

Beef, can only be obtained at Alexandria and Cairo. Preserved soups and a good supply of Liebig's extract of meat for stock are therefore necessary. Veal can be only occasionally met with; but mutton of fair quality, good chickens and geese, pigeons and turkeys beyond praise, can be always obtained below Assouan. During the fast of Ramadan only had we any difficulty in getting fresh provisions. At that season the meat is always killed after sunset; and that which is killed is consumed by the hungry true believers. Vegetables are scarce and not good. Cabbage may now and then be obtained; a very small, but not very good, broad bean; a lettuce resembling dandelion, and cucumbers after Christmas.

We tried several other kinds that are eaten by the natives, but we never asked for them a second time. The one vegetable of Egypt is the onion: they are to be found everywhere in profusion, and are the least strong and the best in the world. Oranges and lemons should be laid in at Cairo: higher up they are scarce; and the blood oranges of Cairo are excellent. The only other fruits in season during the winter are bananas (rarely met with), a kind of very small crab apple called "nabuk," and fresh dates. Dates were just ripe at the time of our arrival, and we ate them every day whilst they lasted. But this was, unfortunately, not more than a fortnight. The fresh date has very little resemblance to the dried fruit we know in England,—juicy and crisp, fresh to the taste, and not too sweet, in consistency, though not in flavour, it is like a good apple. Butter of more or less inferior quality may be always bought. It is generally fresh, but so badly made as to be only fit for cooking; and we found it best to buy it in a clarified state. Really good fresh butter may, however, be occasionally obtained.

With milk we were always well supplied. Though cows of European breeds are at the present time scarce, owing to the frightful cattle pestilences that have caused incalculable mischief from time to time to Egypt, the buffalo has been nearly always exempt from disease; and no village is without its proportion of these hardy, useful, and absolutely hideous beasts. The Egyptian buffalo must surely be antediluvian, a cousin of the mam-

moths that the spirited and imaginative managers of the Crystal Palace have made familiar to our eyes. On its whole carcase ugliness reigns supreme. The upturned face, as the nose is thrust forward and carried level with the forehead; the huge bones, and still more monstrous joints; the ungainly walk, stupid look, and thick, dull, dark hide, whose shining skin is specked with bristles, make the animal truly frightful. But the milk, though slightly inclined to be greasy, is rich, and with morning coffee or tea excellent.

It is well to assign to one of the crew the duty of getting every morning the day's supply. For this purpose he should land before the dahabeah is got underweigh; and in the event of an early start, should go ashore in the small boat, and catch up the vessel with as slight delay to her as possible. There is sometimes a little trouble about these arrangements, and the milk is not cheap. For the trouble's sake, therefore, the crew do not like it, nor for the money's worth does the dragoman; and we frequently saw one or two goats carried with the other live-stock of a dahabeah. The travellers who submitted to this probably were told, and believed, that milk was difficult to get, or did not like the mixture they had been made to taste as buffalo milk.

Eggs below Assouan are always plentiful, fresh, and cheap. Bread of by no means bad quality can be bought at all the large towns. At Cairo and Luxor we found it particularly good. But we were fortunate in our cook.

Girghis was a most excellent baker, and we ordinarily ate home-made bread. Nothing could be better than the Trieste flour we bought at Alexandria. So thought too our servants. They would have had us lay three barrels in stock instead of the one that we found to be amply sufficient; and Ibrahim, on one occasion, made an attack upon it. White flour to Arabs is an irresistible temptation. Habitually living on the best of breads,—that made of the whole flour,—white bread is to them a much coveted luxury. With an Arab, to covet is to endeavour to obtain. With an Arab, also, to give is almost as strong a passion as to appropriate. It can scarcely, therefore, be wondered at, that the much-desired and easily-got-at flour not unfrequently fills the tied-up sleeve or knotted corner of the friends of one's servants' blue cotton gowns.

The fish of the Nile is plentiful, of many kinds, and bad. The temperature of the water is, in truth, too high to produce good fish. Has not nature, by the way, somewhat, in the matter of fish, departed from the harmony of her wisdom and the economy of her laws? It is in hot climates that the lighter articles of diet are the most acceptable; that man's stomach, turning away from beef and mutton, will face poultry and show a bold front to fish. Is it not in the dog-days that we go to Greenwich? And yet, as the temperature of a climate increases, the quality of the fish deteriorates. It is true that the whale of the Arctic regions, if that mammal can be called fish, the

herring and the salmon, both north country fishes, yield when eaten a large amount of fat or animal heat, so that the fish found in northern zones are the best suited for man's necessities there; but the fact remains, that in the climates where fish would be the most acceptable it is the least good.

Last in this list of kitchen supplies, but by no means least in importance, comes fuel. Wood is very scarce in Egypt, and it may be generally stated that the higher you go the scarcer it is. It is best, therefore, to lay in as large a supply at Alexandria (if fitting out be there possible) as the dahabeah will hold. We took with us sufficient for our whole voyage; no very great quantity, as it is only used for baking and washing. Charcoal serves every other fuel purpose. It is as cheap and far better at Alexandria than anywhere else in Egypt, but a failing store may be almost anywhere supplemented.

CHAPTER IV.

FRESH PROVISIONS. MONEY.

It will have been seen by the preceding chapter, that there is no risk of short commons on the Nile. But some little foresight is required on the part of the commissary general, whoever he may be. There are plenty of markets, and the markets are well supplied; but it is not always possible to arrive at any particular village on the market-day; and to wait even a day for the market is, if a fair breeze be blowing, not possible at all. Every dahabeah, therefore, carries her stock of fresh, as well as preserved, provisions. For this purpose the felucca, or small boat, is often turned into a sheepfold; and a number of chicken- and turkey-coops are provided. We shall so frequently refer to our farm, that I shall say no more on this subject now, except to notice that it is in Middle Upper Egypt, say from above Sioot to Esné, that the poultry is the cheapest and the best; consequently it is in that district that the coops should be filled, both in going up and in coming down.

But it will probably be convenient that I should give, before leaving the subject of fitting out, some idea of the prices paid for the chief articles of consumption, and of the relative value and currency of money on the Nile.

Place à l'argent! Money in Egypt has two values—tariff and currency. We need only trouble ourselves with this last. In Alexandria no coin is refused; most are in common circulation; and nearly all can be used in purchases, or changed into piastres at a price approximating to their relative value. At Cairo foreign coin is less easily converted; and in Upper Egypt, the native 1 and 2 piastre silver or copper pieces are by far the most convenient change. Other small coin, will be often received at only half its value. But gold will always command its full price. At Keneh, Luxor, Esné, and Assouan, our Napoleons brought from 162 to 165 piastres; at Cairo only 155; and at Alexandria, 160. The average value, therefore, of piastres was, in 1869–70, at the rate of 8 for a franc or 10 for a shilling. The exchange, however, varies in a greater degree than in European countries, but the variation is in a very uniform direction, and is caused by an almost continuous decrease in the value of piastres.

There are two issues of silver, 1 and 2 piastre-pieces, in common circulation. Both pass equally well in Egypt, Upper and Lower; but in Nubia, only the coin that has no wreath on its face is received. Both in Nubia and in Egypt prices are often fixed and value estimated at so many taralies. The term taralie is equally applied to five-franc pieces and the old dollar of Maria Theresa. These last coins, of a particular issue, are of the two, however, somewhat more valuable when they are changed into piastres. But change is not always to be obtained; and if required, will have to be

paid for at a price proportionate to the necessity of the requirement. Gold, as already shown, is worth more in Upper than in Lower Egypt; nevertheless, some friends of ours received there, from their dragoman, only 100 piastres per £1, just half the value. "*Un honnête homme, un honnête homme pour éviter des désagrémens,*" should make himself independent of his servants and the money-changers, and take from Alexandria, or even from Cairo, notwithstanding its lower rate of exchange, not less than £50 or £60 worth of silver piastres and taralies. Then only will it be with him as it was with us, both in the matter of money and of meat. If mutton was offered us at double the price we knew it should be, we produced from our stores tins of that horrid abomination known as preserved beef; and immediately the meat fell to its market price. If our gold was lightly valued, we brought out from our sack a handful of silver, with a similar (to us) happy result.

Living in Egypt is exceedingly cheap; that is to say, it should be so, but the price per head per day charged by the dragoman, or the estimate made of the cost per month, is always absurdly high and often exorbitant. Nor is it probable that the traveller without a dragoman would fare better at the hands of his cook, or other servant employed to cater for him, if he were ignorant of the prices of the country. We found the information kindly given us by M. B. of so much service, that we now name the prices at which we bought the principal articles of food.

At Alexandria and Cairo provisions are not much cheaper than in the average of European capitals. Meat is sold by the oka = 2¾lb. English. Beef (the best part) was 20 piastres the oka; mutton, about 14. Chickens, 7 to 10 each. Below Cairo, mutton was about 12 piastres the oka. In Cairo, and from thence up through Egypt, the weight generally, if not always, used is the ratali, an ounce more than an English lb. Beef above Cairo is very rarely seen; we only met with it once. Veal can be found sometimes, and bought at about 3 or 4 piastres the ratali. Mutton varies from 5 to 3 piastres the ratali; chickens, from 3 to 5 apiece; geese, 12 to 14; turkeys, from 16 to 25. The huge turkeycocks are worth from 35 to 45 apiece; but we had too much respect for our quiet and digestion to buy them; and, except on one occasion, we confined ourselves to the hens and poults. For this temporary aberration of reason we suffered severely. Wishing to follow the excellent custom of the country, and to take something from Upper Egypt to our friends in Alexandria, we added to our hen flock a most magnificent gobble-gobble. He weighed half as much as a donkey, was beautiful to look at, and awful to listen to. If let loose, he strutted, chuckled, and gobbled unceasingly; if tied up he did just the same, without the strut; and loose or tied, he managed to keep our poultry in continual motion, and ourselves in a nervous fever. I am not of a bloodthirsty disposition, but it was with unmixed satisfaction that I saw him led away to his fate,

and knew that his positively last appearance would be very shortly made at a christening feast.

No estimate of the expense of life in Egypt would be at all complete without a due reference to backshish. Indeed I am not sure but that the very first page should commence a treatise on the subject. Backshish is the first word that meets the ear on landing in the country; it is the last that salutes it on leaving. The cry of backshish pelts one at Alexandria and at Cairo. When the dahabeah is moored, it is thrown in at the window; when sailing, it follows in her wake, skimming over the surface of the water. Land, and it confronts you at the gates of the temples, in the recesses of the caves, and becomes deafening at the Pyramids, the Cataracts, and Wadi Halfeh. As you dream at Philæ it taps your shoulder with a book, full of written testimonials that the intruder always demands it. Eat and it disturbs you; sleep and it wakes you; walk, it fills the path; ride and it floats in the very dust you disturb. Throw yourself down at the verge of the desert, and as you meditate on the silence and the solitude, "backshish" will steal from behind your palm-tree shelter, or drop rustling from its top. It is a bore from which there is no escape. Ride fast, and it has a donkey to keep up with you. Keep your dahabeah in the middle of the Nile, and a boat with "backshish" for its freight comes alongside, and catches at your gunwale, or the dripping bearer of the cry climbs naked on the deck.

But backshish is not a mere bore, for it is the

motive power of Egypt. The mechanist, who with a lever would move the earth, could with backshish turn Egypt upside down, or put a girdle round her deserts with the Nile. It is the "stick that beat the pig that wouldn't get over the stile;" and except by its use, the cleverest old woman would never get home. It lifts the arm that holds the whip that whollops the donkey that carries you. It greases the hand that holds the key that opens the locks that bar the Nile that floats you. It admits you through the portals of the custom-house, and passes you out with a kindly wish. It makes your stay in Egypt agreeable, and smooths every difficulty, social, political, or official. By its help, in spite of calms, your boat will stem the strong current of the river, and breast the cataract, or even, miracle of miracles! turn the native mind and action out of the path it has pursued for centuries.

But this potent djin must be used with discretion, or it will turn and rend you. Give when it is customary to give, and on the scale that is sanctioned by long use, and you will be respected and liked. Give too often, inopportunely, or in excess, and it were better for you not to give at all. Should you err in this direction at any town or village you pass, leave it, and do not stop there on your return. Your fault will follow you to the next village and the next; and unless you repent you thoroughly, you will not outlive its remembrance. If, however, your mistake is committed on board, you will have sown a crop of

discontent very hard to root out, and a strong will only can save you from great discomfort, or perhaps a mutiny. Common sense will here as ever point out that middle path so safe to travel in, so easy to stray from; and by the observanco of two simple rules, backshish may be made an useful servant. Never give except where an extra service justifies, or custom prescribes the gift. Remember that piastres are not as common in Egypt as pennies in England.

In former days Murray tells us that it was the habit in going up to give the crew a sheep at the large towns. Sheep were then sold at 5 francs each. Now it is more common to give money than mutton. Prescription gives the crew, if not badly behaved, a quasi right, which no one would wish to dispute, to some 8 or 10 francs a head during the voyage. The steersman should have half as much again, or twice as much if he does his work particularly well; and the reis claims with justice the share of three men, and often appropriates half of the whole backshish given. Taking the sum mentioned above as the mean, it should be diminished or increased in reason, as the work is light or heavy, and is ill or well done. About half the amount should, when all goes smoothly, be given during the voyage up; the halts made at any of the large towns for sightseeing or breadmaking being chosen as occasions for a present. The remaining moiety will be expected when the ship is paid off. The money for the crew should be given

to the crew, in such a way as will insure to at least several of them the knowledge of the sum given. Arab hands have a tight grasp, and coin slips with difficulty through their fingers.

CHAPTER V.

ALEXANDRIA TO HEAD OF DELTA.

During the three days our fitting-out detained us at Alexandria the weather was broken, but the morning of the 21st November was a brilliant one. The air was fresh and calm, the sun shone as it knows how to shine in Egypt, and my acquaintances of the canal made their toilet. The ducks plumed themselves in the muddy water, the buffalo cow and calf took their bath, and our Arab sailors changed their bedraggled cottons. After the delay inseparable from a start in the East, the last odds and ends were got on board, and it was with a light heart that we saw our orders to cast off carried out about noon. The trinkeet was loosened, but there was no air to fill it, and we commenced our journey with the tow-rope. The men leapt ashore with yells, meant to express the delight they did not feel at leaving their coffee shops, and the dislike they had not of the delay they had caused. Like the hare starting for his race with the tortoise, we went off with a rush. The boat was tracked along at a trot; in a minute we turned the odious mud corner that had so long tantalized my eyes, thirsting for a view, and found ourselves among the garden-surrounded villas, which for a mile or so front the banks of this part of the canal. Sweetly pretty they looked. Their white faces

green-blinded and becreepered. The plants covered with flowers and the palms with fruit.

We soon passed them with their neighbourly lines of sycamores, and the unadorned ugliness of the country confronted us. But we were in luck. Before the men were tired of their frolic, a breeze sprang up, our sail filled, and, as the boat ran up to them, they jumped on board, screaming with joy as one of their number, an old fellow who was beat by the pace, slipped in springing from the bank, and fell into the water. An Arab bears his own misfortune well, but takes a genuine and unconcealed pleasure in that of his fellows.

The Mahmoudëh Canal constructed by Mohammed Ali in 1819–20, is a straight water-way with a bend in it, running from Alexandria to Atfeh, a village on the Rosetta branch of the Nile. It is forty-two miles in length, some twenty yards in breadth, of a not very varying depth of about four feet, and of uniform ugliness. Twenty thousand men are said to have contributed with their bones to the formation of its banks. Poor fellows! they have found a plain resting-place, and do not seem to have agreed with the soil. The mud still lies in little heaps on either side, retaining almost the shape given it as it fell from the shovels, sacks, and baskets which carried it from the bed of the canal. Grass does not grow on it, weeds cover it barely, and the unshod feet of the men or donkeys which pass over it have had no power to fashion and shape the uneven surface. We passed a few villages, the first

wearing a pretentious suburban air, the reflection as it were of its big neighbour; and then we came to an Egyptian fellaheen village, *pur et simple*. Built of mud, and crowded on to the canal, the tiny hovels stood like a number of toadstools of unequal size and no stalks, each cropping out where it could push its way among its fellows. Many were as shapeless as a Connemara cottage, others were capped by lilliputian domes, or had toy pigeon-houses sprouting from their sides and tops; and on one an attempt at primeval decoration had been made with about a pint of whitewash. Each and all were swarming with life; children and cats disputed the door-ways with the chickens and geese, and a similar mimic strife was waged by the goats and dogs on the house-tops.

That night we slept at Birket, a village of the same character; and the next day a light and variable wind brought us, with the aid of the tow-rope, to Atfeh. All impatient for our first view of the Nile, we gave orders for an early start, but the lock gates, which give access to the river, though of European construction, had Egyptian officials for their keepers. We had to deal, however, in this instance, with men of sense; people who understood their own interest, and valued it, Easterns though they were, even higher than their importance; so that, after an hour or two's delay, the gates were opened. Way was made for us through the crowd of native boats, waiting like ourselves, only with more patience, and in

a few minutes more we had our first glimpse of the Nile. I looked out aghast! Could it be possible that we had undertaken to stem for near one thousand miles that turbid, swirling river, whose heavy stream, as it caught the bow of our dahabeah, now passing out of the lock-cut, threatened to carry us to the sea.

We were only in a branch of a branch of the main river, but it was three times as big, and looked as swollen and heavy as the largest of English rivers in a winter flood. Fortunately we had a warp out, which checked the rush we were making across the stream, and in time brought us back and alongside the bank we had quitted. There we remained, for half a gale quickly sprang up, and it took twenty men to warp us a hundred yards against wind and current into a small bight that afforded partial protection.

The next morning the wind moderated sufficiently to enable us to reach Fouah, two miles distant, a very old, and once well-to-do, town. Its buildings are above the average in solidity and taste, and close above us hung a projecting window, whose light and quaint wooden framework, and dainty lace-like lattices, I longed to buy and carry home. Here we were detained by the increasing force of the breeze for several hours, and given ample opportunity to make acquaintance with the customs, sometimes cleanly, and the manners, certainly startling, of the natives. The banks of the Nile are resorted to for every sort of purpose, and the people

of the Delta are far more primitive than those of Upper Egypt. The family linen, the family pots and pans, and the family itself, came or were carried to the river, and were all washed together. One hollow in the bank was being used as a mosque. In another two fellahs were gravely shaving each other, after the Eastern or thorough fashion.

The children looking at us had a black half-circle under their eyes. At first we thought that the shade was an effort at decoration, made by some vain mother, whose dye was dark, and brush a feather. But when a child came near, a fringe of flies was seen, ranged like pigs at a trough; their sides pressed together, heads on the lower eyelid, and tails on the cheek. Some cruel superstition forbids the Egyptian mother to brush the flies from her infant's face; and before the poor little wretches can protect themselves, their eyes become so accustomed to be fed on, that they rarely lift a hand to drive the flies away.

The causes of ophthalmia are often discussed, and the palm for mischief is sometimes awarded to the hot desert sand; sometimes to the cold night air; or, in Cairo, to the rapid evaporation produced by the great heat on the constantly watered streets. But surely the fly scavenger of the unwashed children's eyes must be a much more frequent conveyor of the poison. I have often felt one of these horrid insects settle on my face, and with a creep that made me shudder, run towards my eye.

In the afternoon, the wind shifting a little to the east, we found that if we could get hauled round the bight in which Fouah stands, we should be able to use our sails; and the hawsers were got out with the purpose of warping us round that part of the bend, about a hundred and fifty yards long, down which the wind headed us. We now had our first experience of Arab boatmen's skill and tactics. There were two ways of proceeding. To haul the boat round the bank at which we lay was one, and it looked simple to adopt, but from the combined strength of the opposing wind and current it was almost impossible to execute. The other, to warp across into some dead water at the bank of an opposite island, entailed some trouble, but was perfectly easy. The reis, however, would not hear of it. Was not this bank here under his foot, and the other bank across the river; was it not easy to walk with the hawser along this bank, hard to row with it to the other across? To haul the dahabeah ahead it was necessary to fix the hawser—good; but was it not better to fix it where it could easiest be fixed? When that was done, if Allah willed it, we should get on; if he did not so will, why—and here bowing his head in token of submission to Allah's will, he gave orders to take the rope ahead. So it was made fast where it was most easy to make it fast, and no use when fastened, and we wasted two hours. At the end of that time, the reis acting on the submission he had expressed, gave up the attempt to get forward. We then insisted on the

rope being sent across, and in a quarter of an hour we had rounded the corner, and were tearing along with quite as much wind in our sails as was pleasant.

The next day or two added to our experience of the way Arab, but produced no incident much worth recording. The wind was contrary or light, but the climate was delightful; the Nile was unusually high, and the strong stream forbad much progress, but we were rich in time; the distance traversed and the change of scene were small, but then everything we saw was new and full of interest. On the land the fellaheen were busy. At one spot a man was sowing, ankle-deep in mud. Father Nile, with most paternal care, had prepared his ground, and had just run quietly off, leaving a smooth and weedless black surface ready to the peasant's hand. No model farm, stocked with sheep and bullocks, and supplied with all the patent machines, the pride of agricultural shows, ever left a field so rich and ripe for seed. On a little higher land, above the river's rise, a plough was at work whose shape some ancient picture-book of Biblical stories had made familiar to us. It was drawn by a huge, gaunt camel and a donkey, looking, by comparison perhaps, scarce the size of life. The donkey had found a companion more stubborn than himself, and for once the freely given blows fell not on him. The camel moved like a clock not wound up, with a stick for a pendulum; so long as the stick rose and fell he moved: a blow for a step, a savage grunt for a blow, and then a stop. On the

river were numbers of native boats full of "notions" for sale at Alexandria. Old beyond calculation in shape, and often in material, they were new to us, like the jokes in the "Tin Trumpet" that excellent predecessor of Joe Miller, for their very age's sake.

On the evening of the 26th we reached Kafré Zayát, about half way to Cairo. The railway from Alexandria here crosses the Nile on a bridge handsome by reason of its solidity. When the Nile is high there is no room for boats of any size to pass under it, and an arch, resting on a turn-table, can be swung aside when it is necessary to open the waterway. The whole of the next day we were detained below the bridge, as it did not please the railway officials to permit the opening of the gate. It was not their custom to do so, we were told, unless there happened to be a good upstream breeze. Without such a wind the passage of the boats took a long time, and the railway might be blocked for an hour or more. The weather had been calm, and the bridge had consequently remained closed already for one or two days, so that there were collected above and below a fleet of perhaps 150 native boats of all sizes. The day was consumed in civil remonstrances on our part at the detention, and by dint of letters, messages, and backshish, we extracted a promise that on the morrow's morning, wind or no wind, we should be let through.

The next morning, having paid our toll, we were gratified by seeing the arch turning on the axis of one of the iron

pillars that supported it, until it lay up and down instead of across the river. There were some twenty or thirty boats between us and the bridge, and as the morning was calm, hawsers, made fast above bridge, were passed along these, and we all hung attached to the hawsers like onions on a string. Authority is wonderfully obeyed in Egypt, and though every man continuously yelled, not a boat moved till the kaftân gave his orders. Then with a fearful clamour hundreds of men set to work together, and the arch, perhaps twenty yards broad, was filled with boats. Grinding along the iron sides of the bridge, and bumping against each other, the craft were painfully hauled through. As we passed up and cleared the arch, our crew, with true Arab clumsiness, ceased to haul just too soon, and the strong stream catching the boat, dashed her against the bridge with a crash that threatened to break her to pieces. The kaftân, however, probably well used to such small accidents, was ready with his men, and thirty or forty pair of arms and legs pushed and kicked us off the pier-head on which we rested. No sooner were we safe than the big gate swung again upon its pivot, and the many hapless traders above and below were left to wait for some future season more convenient to the railway for its opening.

We made fast to talk over and repair the damages we had not sustained, and had hardly got under weigh again to slowly and painfully track up stream, when a strong W.N.W. wind came up with a sudden gust. With ready will our men dropped the tow-rope,

and plunged through the mud and water to gain the dahabeah. In a few minutes our sails were loosened, and we rushing up the river. The quantity of canvas carried by a dahabeah does not make sailing in a strong wind, unless the boat be a large one, always agreeable. The breeze is often puffy, the lateen sail, with its enormous yard, is difficult to manage, and the men are awkward. They are, however, very timid; and though this quality renders them perfectly useless when an accident does occur, it makes them take pains that none should happen. The sheet of the mainsail is never made fast; in fine weather one man, in rough winds two, three, or even four men, hold it. It is the duty of the steersman, who, from his commanding position on the upper deck, has a good view all round, to watch if any squall be coming up, and to order the slackening or letting fly of the sheet. This he is ever ready to do, and with a strong wind the cry from him of "harlez" (ready) with its echoed "harlez" from the men, is almost constant. We carried the breeze with us till 7 p.m., when it failed, and we made fast for the night, thirty-eight miles from the spot we had left at noon—a rate of speed we seldom equalled. Five miles an hour, though not much in dead water, is, against such a stream as that of the Nile, very quick travelling.

A little above the point now reached, we had our first view of the desert. Not the desert we had seen in our dreams, or in pictures, nor yet the desert we were to see in Upper Egypt; but a scene of some animation and much

beauty. As we ran up a straight reach that measured perhaps two miles in length, but which from its breadth did not appear more than half that size, we passed between a waste on the right hand, and highly cultivated land on the other. Here men were working at their crops; there a herd of camels were browsing on the parched scant herbage; and large flocks of pelicans, wild geese, and ducks floated in the air, or dashed into the water. For the first time we saw the pelican of the desert, and the white stork of Egypt. Even the wild geese and duck were new to us in their habits and numbers, for we had never before seen them in such thousands, or so fearless of man.

In front of us the river took a somewhat abrupt bend to the left, and this bend, both on the bank and inland, was thickly studded with groves of tall wavy palms and of huge spreading sycamores. On the right of us the desert came down to the river's edge, and the tiny wavelets of sand driven by the breeze fell on the very water. A short distance, perhaps a mile, inland the ground rose, and the view was shut in by an undulating line of hills and slopes. This ridge was peculiar and very rich in colour. The bright golden undertone of sand was at once sobered and enriched by lines of purple brown, thick and thin, straight and curved, running and crossing in all directions, freely dashed on by nature's pencil. Thus the small hollows and gentle swells were sharply marked out and defined; and extent, as well as richness of colouring, was given to a narrow strip of

barren waste. Between the ridge of hills on the right, and the woods on the left, there lay straight before us a debateable land. There war was constantly carried on; war none the less deadly that it was silent—and the fertile soil of Egypt struggled with the arid desert—life with death—for mastery of the plain. Of grass and herbage there was none; but next the wood, the big trees stood in clumps, then in pairs; and further out alone,—outposts, as it were of the host to which they belonged. Round them the hot dry sand curled and beat, drifting high up their trunks, leaping even into the branches, and falling at their feet to suck the moisture from the roots. Several times we saw in Upper Egypt palm-trees, growing within the margin of the desert; but this was the only place where we met with the huge sycamore standing in a sea of sand, and looking like gigantic park-trees in England, surrounded by a flood.

On November 30, the breeze was again strong and true, and we had a most enjoyable sail. What in nature could be more perfect than was now the Delta! The hot sun, clear and cloudless sky, balmy desert atmosphere, and crisp refreshing breeze. The dahabeah rushed steadily on, breasting the river's stream, rounding point after point, and opening at each something new, something requiring to be looked at, and passed as soon as well seen. A mile or two above Werdan we made the Pyramids. Could it be possible that the huge masses we so distinctly saw were distant from us nearly twenty

miles! Distance in this country is very hard to judge. The clearness of the atmosphere and the strong light, combine to deceive the eye by the very power they give it. One cannot believe that the man or camel, whose moving legs are distinguishable, are perhaps two miles away. So was it with us at the Pyramids. According to our map and compass, eighteen miles of flat separated them from us. By our eye, they stood within five.

I am not going to say much about the temples, the antiquities, or the Pyramids of Egypt. What they are, what they were, and what they are supposed to have been built for,—is this not written in books of travel without number? Dry information about them will be found in Murray,—all, perhaps, that can be said without drawing on the imagination: and my purpose is not to give our impression of the lions, but rather an account of the climate, the nature of the life led on the Nile, and the means by which little men, as well as big ones, may manage to enjoy that which we found so perfect. But I must notice one feature of the Pyramids of Ghiseh, that took us by surprise—I mean their beauty. We had never before seen much beauty in the pyramidal form, and should probably, if we had thought about it, have denied that there could be any. We should have been very wrong: there is an unity, harmony, a completeness, strength, and perfection of shape in the Great Pyramids, that is as admirable as it is wonderful; and after seeing

them, one ceases to be astonished at the ravings written about them by some of their admirers.

The breeze held good as we ran along mile after mile. The distance traversed, and the small change to be observed in the angle of the faces exposed to us, or in the relative position of one pyramid to the other, proved the vastness of their size, and the correctness of our maps.

About 3 p.m., we reached the Barrage, close to the head of the Delta. Impatient to reach Cairo, we gave little observation to this curious weir, and shall leave what we have to say about it physically, for our return. A toll had to be paid, and we put the reis ashore to pay it. There are lock-gates at either side of the river, and he was sent to our surprise backwards and forwards from one to the other. The day was waning, the breeze dying, and we impatient. Unable to stand it, we beckoned to an official on the bank close by us, and as Ibrahim could not or would not make our meaning plain, we tried our hands and tongues at Arabic. The success was complete. If our words were few, was not backshish a language in itself? If our pronunciation was not intelligible, who could misunderstand the jingle of piastres? So in five minutes we were being hauled through the lock-gates, both now open, as the level of the water above and below the weir was the same. The barrier passed, we stopped at the bank to pick up the reis, and fulfil our promises. The old man came on board, hot with his run, and highly displeased with

all we had done. His boat had been taken through the locks, a most important operation, without his aid. Backshish had been given, and had not even touched his fingers. Worse still, we seemed, as we were, innocent of the injury we had done to his pocket and his pride, and all around sailors, kawasses, and idlers were laughing at him. Well might his eyes flash, and his moustache curl like the pig's tail, so tight that it threatened to lift him off the ground. I have heard people doubt, such is the want of faith in this material age, that the hair of the man who saw the ghost really stood on end. I wish they could have seen Reis Ibrahim in a rage.

But a gentle air filled our sails, and a cup of coffee soothed the flames of his discontent, and all was well with us again before we had left the Barrage out of sight. What a golden evening it was, as reaching the head of the Delta, we saw the broad expanse of the whole Nile. The water studded with islands, dotted with white lateen sails, glowing with the burnished copper beams of the setting sun, and alive with long lines of huge pelicans, that, rising heavily at our approach, dropped again in our course as if impatient of exertion and careless of man. Such an hour is a poem that can never be written: a hymn of praise that cannot be sung.

CHAPTER VI.

CAIRO.

With the fading light the evening breeze died away, and we brought up for the night at a village four miles below Cairo. The next morning, December 1, was lovely, calm, and still. The city was within sight, but between us and it there was a difficulty to be overcome that might detain us for hours or even for days. We were on the left bank of the river, Cairo is on the right. Opposite to us was an island, the highest of the chain that runs down to the head of the Delta, and consequently the first to separate the Nile into the great Damietta and Rosetta branches. Unfortunately for the traffic of the river, Hamil Pasha had chosen as a site for a large palace a spot on the Cairene bank, and so in the Damietta branch, a short distance below this island; and Hamil Pasha is brother to the viceroy, and therefore was, according to the custom of the country, also the viceroy's heir. Rich men do not love their heirs, and the power of the Sultan was invoked to deprive Hamil of his birthright, whilst the river was pressed into service to uproot his palace. But the Nile was not so easily managed as the Porte. The viceroy caused a huge stone weir to be constructed just above the point of the river's bifurcation. This weir, springing from the

side on which we lay, runs obliquely down the river's course, and extends so far across it as almost to cover the head of the Rosetta branch, and to overlap the island. It was sought, our people said, by this means to turn the whole volume of the Nile into the Damietta channel, and so on to Hamil Pasha's palace.

The work must have cost large sums, but that to the Khedive is of small consequence; it also greatly impedes the navigation, a matter to him of no import; but the palace still stands as firm as ever, and this must be very annoying. This weir now lay in our course; the water fell over it in a great glassy wave. It was not possible to tow over or round it, and there was not wind enough to take us across through the heavy stream it caused to the other side. We waited, anxiously watching the swelling of our sails, and listening to the rustle of the palm branches. At last the puffs became a little and a little stronger, and grew into a breeze. Towing up to the foot of the weir we pushed off and ran along its downward-trending face. With a fair breeze and a current, which, owing to the diagonal direction of the weir, was rather in our favour than opposed to us, we passed through some four or five hundred yards of white and broken water with speed and ease. But as we neared the end of the weir and the head of the island our position became less good. The water fell sideways from the Damietta branch into the Rosetta one, whose level was unnaturally lowered by the action of the weir, and a

fearfully heavy stream ran from the tail of the weir on to the head of the island. So fierce was this current that it had washed away in places the stone coating of the island, and turned a convex into a concave face. As long as we had only to contend with the current running from the weir, we held our own and something more, but the moment our boat's bow entered the sideway stream she was swept down with dangerous violence. Her fate seemed almost determined. Driven on to the stonework, she could not have escaped. It was only doubtful whether she would have been swamped before she was crushed, or crushed before she was swamped. The breeze held good, and our sails were full, but what avail was this against such a flood as was carrying us backward. Nearer and nearer we came to the jagged broken stonework, on which the force of the Nile was savagely breaking. The reis stuck to the helm, the rest of the crew were paralysed with fear.

An Arab sailor in distress calls for aid to "Saïd," a very holy man, and a pitiful cry to this Mussulman saint went up from our deck. Ibrahim alone had the courage, in his ignorance of our danger, to seize a pole as if to stave us off, and break the shock that would have been our destruction. Of a sudden the boat heeled over, the breeze had strengthened, and we stood for a moment still in the seething water. Then the boat made way, and now advancing, now only holding her own, she slowly drew her length, inch by inch, along and away

from the head of the island. Our escape was so narrow, that as we passed into the Damietta branch, our stern and rudder scraped, and hung for an instant upon the most upstream blocks of stone. It was but a moment, and then the stream caught our broadside and swept us down, but on the safe side of the island. What a mixed feeling of relief and fear comes over one when a danger is passed! During its actual presence the will braces the nerves, and it is not acknowledged, or if acknowledged it is faced; but as soon as it is over, weak nature asserts herself. The body makes no effort to conceal how much it has endured, and turns hot and cold, and even trembles at the very moment the mind is rejoicing at the escape.

Different constitutions give different expressions to their feelings. We involuntarily broke out into an hurrah as the point was turned, and then submitted to the reaction just described. Ibrahim improved the occasion by declaring that he had saved us with the pole he had not used; some of the crew laughed like children; and the reis, when he recovered his breath, burst out into violent protests against our rashness in making him attempt so dangerous a passage. I could not for some time understand the old man's rage, but afterwards had no doubt that Ibrahim, longing for the coffee-shops, had ordered him, in our name, to get to Cairo, and took care not to translate to us the objections he made to the attempt. It was a

most dangerous one in the then state of the river, except with a strong, fair, and steady breeze: conditions which, during our adventure, were not fulfilled.

We soon made the Cairene shore, but the breeze had expended itself in the gust that saved us, and the two miles we were distant from the city cost us four hours of hard labour. The stream was strong, and the bank sometimes ankle, sometimes knee, deep in rich alluvial soil, heavily taxed our towing crew. The fellaheen were busy on the land, sowing the grain broadcast, and it was easy to mark the falling in of the inundation by the results of their labour. Close to us was the strip, but just bare of water, black and shiny in the sun, marked only by the footsteps of the sower, and speckled by the grain as it fell from his hand. Then a line of yellow, succeeded by one of green, and by another and another, each of darker shade, till the highest limit of the flood was traced by a brown and barren bank.

We stopped that night at Ramleh, the lower of the two Cairo ports; and finding it horribly noisy, dirty, and disagreeable, moved on the next day about three-quarters of a mile to the upper port, Boulak. Cairo stands on a hill, about a mile from the Nile, and the bank for nearly two miles is almost a continuous line of river shipping. Ramleh is the boat-building and repairing quarter, the docks of Egypt. Boulak is the port proper, where merchandise is taken in and discharged. It is difficult to

say which is the most unpleasant to remain in. If the noise is greater at Ramleh, the smells of Boulak are unequalled, and the sights of both are neither to be remembered or described. Egypt is a land of sweetness. There are in it, no doubt, as in every inhabited country, things unclean; but the earth deodorises and the hot sun evaporates all impurity so quickly that one habitually breathes none but the sweetest air. That semi-contraction of mouth and nostril peculiar to a high state of civilization is forgotten on the Nile, and with open mouth one drinks deep draughts of the fragrant atmosphere. Boulak is the exception which proves the rule of Egypt's sweetness.

C. spent her time at Cairo, adding to the number of our stores, riding donkey-back about the crowded streets, and recognising everywhere the scenes she had lived amongst, both in the letterpress and illustrations of her Arabian Nights. If Egypt constantly reminds one of early Bible story, Cairo is still the setting, the very framework, of the "Thousand-and-one Nights' Entertainments." Unlike Constantinople, it is undiluted by Western men and manners, and remains as Eastern as it was thousands of years ago.

The mosque and muezzin, the water-carrier and his donkey, the tailor and his shop, are the very same that we lived with as children; and in fact, as in story, the purchaser steps up into the seller's lilliputian shop, open to the street, sits with him on his carpet, on a level with the

waists of the passers-by, and makes his bargain with their aid, advice, and approval. Ibrahim was with C., and I remained on board, with two men to take care of me and the dahabeah. In the afternoon these two knocked at the cabin-door, and came in. One was the steersman, Aref by name: a tall, rather effeminately made and looking man, of bright olive complexion, hairless face, large dark and flashing eyes, who with his clothes more than usually full and flowing, a shawl habitually worn round his waist, and a red turban on his head, fulfilled my ideal of Meg Merrilies. With him was Abed, the caretaker of our boat during her summer idleness.

Living as we did on deck, within hearing of our crew, we soon gave each a name by which he could be spoken of without attracting his or his fellows' attention. Abed was soon called "the faithful." Abed had a remarkably handsome face, with a gentle, kindly-hearted expression, most true to the nature of the man. Ever ready to undertake and willing to perform, he accepted as his share half of the whole ship's work, did it as if it was the pleasure of his day, and then turned for recreation to whatever remained to be done. If the boat went aground, Abed was the first into the water and the last out. It was Abed who carried the hated tow-rope ashore and brought it back. He ran of errands, got the milk, washed our clothes, at need made a cup of coffee, and regularly cleansed, fed, and watered our farm. The Arabs are carelessly cruel to animals, Abed was so never.

The chickens and turkeys knew and followed him; and the sheep, as soon as he untied them in the felucca, leapt ashore upon his heels. As to us, he was the comfort and dependence of our lives, and not once in five months did we have fault to find with Abed, or lack a thing that he could do for us.

He now introduced Aref to me, and told in Arabic a long story. Aref then followed with his account of the same. After a time I began to gather something of their meaning; and by dint of much repetition, mutual patience, and a liberal use of Abed's English, which consisted of the word "yes," beautifully pronounced, I learnt that Aref was going back to Alexandria, and didn't like it; that the reis was the cause of his leaving the ship, and that I was requested to prevent his dismissal. This was, of course, impossible, and Aref had to go. The reis was by no means unwilling that I should interfere, as my so doing would have shifted all responsibility from his shoulders to mine.

During our short stay at Cairo further changes were made in the crew, and I had visits from those that came and those that went. The old man, whose early tumble in the mud aroused our pity and his comrades' laughter, besought me to keep him. He had the most beautiful large soft brown eyes I ever saw. It was difficult to refuse their piteous appeal; but he was lazier than he was weak, and dirtier than either, and I could not grant the interference in his favour already refused to Aref. Radouan, a reis out

of place, came on board, and was introduced in state as our future steersman, and second in command. Then Hagar Said, a negro without front teeth, and a middle-aged man named Omar, kissed my hand in token of enlistment. Lastly, a shrill cry of "backshish" in my ear made me jump, and I turned to see the urchin who had come with us from Alexandria as cook and servant to the crew. He was a stunted negro boy, whose age one could not guess, and who would only be unjustly described as all rags and dirt, because he was remarkable for so much dirt and so little rag. The nephew of Aref, he was about to return to Alexandria, and we were most glad to give him the piastres of farewell.

Our crew was now complete, and consisted of the reis, the steersman Radouan, five men, and a lad named Zenate. Thus, with our two servants and our two selves, we were twelve souls in all. A small number, but sufficient for the size of our boat. Large dahabeahs have as many as twelve and fourteen men, not including the reis and steersman.

On December 3, we were all ready for a start, but not so our crew. The reis, in arriving on the 1st, had asked for one day as necessary for his preparations; and we had of course given it, with the understanding that on the 3rd we should depart. The 3rd came, and every possible excuse was made to detain us. When these were exhausted, the men could not be found. First one and then another was missing, and hour after hour went by.

Those who were on board went ashore to find the missing ones; and when, during their absence, the men sought for returned, they in turn were sent by the reis in search of their seekers. Warned by Murray that it is always most difficult to get away from Cairo, we were prepared for some delay; but the pertinacity with which all endeavours to get off were met, made us think that there must be some more than ordinary reason for so great a desire to remain. We inquired, therefore, from Ibrahim if this was the case. It was so: the day was the vigil of the cruel Ramadan; and our poor boatmen longed to pass their last day of pleasure in the riotous state of living authorised by custom. Now Ibrahim was a Copt, and by no means an amiable man. The suffering of a Mussulman was to him rather a source of satisfaction; and to deny our men a last enjoyment allowed by their religion was to the Copt a Christian act. So Ibrahim did no violence to his habits, and lied. There was a feast, he said, the day before Ramadan commenced, but this was on the day after the morrow, and if the hawager waited for it, he must remain where he was for three days more. This decided us; and we ordered the sails to be cast loose, and the boat to start with or without her full crew. Reluctantly and doggedly, after a threat to leave the reis behind, we were obeyed; the men immediately appeared, and we pushed off, freighted, owing to an involuntary act of harshness, with the ill-will and discontent of every Mussulman on board.

CHAPTER VII.

CAIRO TO MINIEH.

At last we had made a start. Our voyage from Alexandria to Cairo was regarded as a preliminary canter to the real race—as the drive or ride to cover before the true business of the day commences. We were now off, and though the breeze failed us, and by nightfall we had only reached Girgeh, an outskirt of Cairo, about three miles distant, it was with feelings of satisfaction, and a temper very different from that of our men, that we listened in the still night to the beatings of the tomtoms, and other discordant noises, that came to us softened by our distance from the feasting city. The next morning we started with a moderate N.N.W. breeze, and reached Kafr el Aiat, a distance of thirty-one miles, without any greater mishap than running aground three times. The sail was most charming, and the scenery picturesque.

In the early part of it, the Great Pyramids, which stand almost abreast of Cairo, were passed and left behind. Then we ran by the Pyramids of Sakarah, useful as a contrast to those of Ghiseh, and showing by their faults the perfections and beauty of their neighbours; and at Shobak we came upon a most lovely view. Groves and groups of palms covered an extent of two or three

square miles, and as they opened here into glades, there into an open space, the eye caught, interspersed amongst them and dotted over the opener landscape, a number of huge forest trees, probably sycamores. The new corn, perhaps six inches high, gave the whole oasis a coat of brilliant green; and the desert at the sides framed in a picture that reminded me strongly of one, painted by Martin I think, of Paradise.

At sunset I wanted to stop, and we went to the bank; but the fear of *cattiva gente* soon sent us adrift again. At all the larger villages there are guards appointed, and paid by the government, whose duty it is to watch over the safety of boats as they rest at night. Until we got above Sioot, our reis strongly objected to stop except at one of these villages. He had ever the fear of robbery and murder before him; with how much reason it is difficult to say. In Egypt there is nothing new, and nothing old is ever forgotten; so that every robbery that ever was committed is remembered, and spoken of as if it had been a crime of yesterday; and an ill name once acquired, sticks by a village from generation to generation. The excuse of "no guards" was, no doubt, often put forward as a reason to go on if progress was desired, or to stop because none would be found for miles to come, if stopping smiled upon our crew. But, as a rule, the fear of passing a guardless night was genuine; and it was amusing to see how the country boats collected together

at sunset in any part of the river that had a bad name. Our presence was a great attraction; and if, as we often did, we made fast in the afternoon, by night we had become the centre of a little fleet. A dahabeah meant a foreigner, and a foreigner had guns. We also possessed one. Too great an invalid to shoot, I had come without a powder-burning weapon of any kind; but at the earnest and reiterated request of the reis and Ibrahim, we took on board at Cairo a double-barrel. This it was their joy to make display with on arriving at any supicious place. "Ah," said Ibrahim "the hawager does not know, but I know. Two men were murdered here in a dahabeah last week, and there is not a man on board who if the *cattiva gente* came, would not jump overboard. I alone should remain to be killed. Let me now fire the gun, and no one will come."

So we used to sleep wherever there were guards, and to give the guard two or three piastres in the morning. Thus we were all pleased. No one had a nocturnal bath, and Ibrahim's courage and fidelity wrought him no evil. The preparations for the night were very simple. First the indispensable protector was demanded; then two boat pegs, rough small piles, three feet long and pointed at one end, were got out, and driven into the earth at the head and stern of the dahabeah. To these hawsers were made fast. The plank or bridge was then thrown from the gunwale to the shore; and, lastly, both the main and upper deck were covered in with awnings,

to serve as sleeping-rooms for the reis, our servants, and the crew.

The breeze strengthened during the night; and I knew by the lap of the waves against our sides, and the coughs of the men on deck, how cold it was. The nights in this part of Egypt are often very fresh, and there is about Cairo, in November, not unfrequently a heavy fog. Tested by the thermometer the temperature is seldom really low; but the thermometer is a most unsympathetic measure of sensation, and one may be very cold indeed in spite of Fahrenheit's assertion that the air is temperate. We got under weigh at 7.30, and carrying with us a strong breeze, reached Benisouef, forty-one miles distant, in twelve hours. How slow is travelling on the Nile! With so much wind that our after sail was not set, and the sheet of the mainsail, which is never made fast, required constantly two and sometimes three men to hold it, we did not accomplish three and a half miles in the hour. The day, unlike its predecessor, was a plain one, but in keeping with the country, which was dull, colourless, and sterile. The ship too was dull. It was but the second day of Ramadan, and the men were not accustomed to its privations. In all suffering, whether self-prescribed or unavoidable, the intermediate stage is the most trying. At the commencement, nature, untamed and resisting, helps the patient to endure; at the last, custom has partly reconciled him to his trial; or weakness, consequent on suffering, has dulled his

capacity for pain. But there is a time between the two which is worse than either: when neither novelty nor habit, lend a feeble distraction,—when the nerve, already weakened and not yet dulled, shrinks from the pain from which it knows there is no escape.

Our men were now in this stage; the first day of their religion-inflicted penance was borne with courage and goodwill; but during the two or three succeeding ones, the mortification of the flesh was great, and the spirit rebellious. Ramadan is a severe penance, and its general strict observance shows how strong a hold the Mohammedan religion has upon its followers. For thirty days, no Mohammedan among our crew ate, drank, or smoked, between four in the morning and five at night. Such a fast would be severe to us in an English climate: how much more is it trying under an Egyptian sun, to men whose day is a constant succession of snacks, and who must feel, without tobacco, much as a eel would do wrapped in a damp cloth—alive, but thoroughly miserable. No wonder that our ship was dull. Gorging all night, and fasting all day, the men suffered from repletion in the morning, from weakness in the evening; and owing to one or the other cause, were alike unfit for work or for play.

Benisouef is the first town of any importance met with above Cairo. But we, impatient to leave foggy and cold nights behind us, gave it no attention; so getting under weigh at breakfast-time, we poled and towed among the submerged sandbanks that later in

the season impede the approach to the town, until the light morning air strengthened into a fine N.W. breeze, and drove us, all canvas set, dashing up the stream. And a most lovely sail we had. Nothing can be more enjoyable to a sick man than this Nile travelling when things go right. Bright, light, and fresh as are the air, the scene, and the sun, one forgets one's pains, one's aches, and one's troubles, forgets one's last food, and prepares for more. With enough to think of to turn the mind from mischievous self-contemplation, there is nothing to try or harass. Life perforce ceases to be a labour, or even an occupation, and man lives for the sake of living —for the material pleasures of existence, that nature, in such a climate, so freely supplies. Sufficient for the day is it to breathe such balmy air, to bask in the sun, to eat when the body needs food, and to sleep when the brain desires rest.

In the afternoon, however, we were recalled from dreamland by a breeze too strong for my or the reis's nerves. Staggering along to the almost continuous cry of "harlez," the men did not on one occasion let the main sheet fly quite quickly enough, and we took in a bucket-full of water. Petroleum could not have blazed out more quickly than our reis; and the mischief was mopped up amid a storm of shrieks, scolding, and cries, that sounded like the appropriate swearing in Arabic of Marryat's boatswain, Mr. Chucks. About the same time, two very large "merkebs" came up with us; their size,

and the excellence of their equipment, declared them to be the property of the viceroy. They were laden with immense boiler plates and tubes, and we called the first Blunderbuss, and the second, from her misconduct, Blunderbore. Blunderbuss ran right by, and left us a little abashed by her size, and envious of her speed, but neither frightened nor hurt. But Blunderbore wouldn't leave us. For two long hours she stuck close to us, now before, now behind, now on each side, everything but over us. She wouldn't steer, and as she yawed about all over the river, we owed our escape from a collision, that her weight would have made most serious, to good fortune rather than to skill on our part, or consideration on hers. We were quit of her, however, for the fear, and we pulled up at Massarah as the sun was going down, side by side, the best of friends. The desert scenery we had been passing through was very interesting. Sandhills and bluffs—part sand, part stone—the debris of fortifications and buildings of remote ages, ran down to and along the river. In many places the ruins had been or were being excavated by collectors of relics or of nitre. At one spot there was an encampment of diggers, and we saw our first Arab tents, looking, but for their camel hair coverings, just like a gipsy camp on Epsom downs. We saw too our first vultures, and the desert character of the whole scene was only increased by the occasional thin lines of palms, that here and there fringed the bank.

Massarah is a Frankicised looking place, where tall chimneys overtopping the palm-trees, and other go-ahead signs, rudely brought us back to civilization. We left it early next morning, but it was some hours before we got beyond its well-done-by and well-to-do appearance. The Nile began to have a more southern aspect, and to resemble more nearly the Nile of our expectations; but our illusions were constantly destroyed by tall factory chimneys, and the scream of the railway whistle. We even at one spot saw two engines on the bank for raising water. They were not in use however; one lying on its side, the other standing upright; and Ibrahim declared that nothing would induce the fellaheen to work them.

A few hours sail left the sugar mills behind, and the scenery reminded us of the Hampshire downs, as we have seen them under the very hot sun of a very hot summer. But the downs before us were rolling hills of sand; the scant firs were replaced by palm-trees, and the distant wood, resembling a large clump of beeches, was composed of trees unknown to us.

Sleeping at Golo Sana, we tried to get under weigh the next morning at our usual hour, but Girghis was absent. The reis went in search of him, and did not return; another man went after the reis; and another and another till we were left with Radouan, Ibrahim, Abed, and the boy. At ten o'clock my patience gave way, and I began to hobble up the bank. There, underneath it,

within twenty yards of the boat, but by no means disturbed by Radouan's incessant shouts, were collected the whole of our crew, lying on the broad of their backs or the flat of their stomachs. At sight of me they came on board, and I ordered the boat to start. Girghis was still absent, and it was a serious thing to leave our cook behind; but to have submitted, would have been to lose all control, and to make Girghis master of the ship. So we insisted, and just as the boat got off, he appeared hot and out of breath. He had been, he said, in search of mutton, and had been sent from place to place for it in vain.

We had a good breeze all day; just such a breeze as on ordinary occasions the *Lotus* rejoiced in; but for some reason we could not understand, the boat was not allowed to make any way. She was tacked incessantly from side to side; her sails were never fairly set, and the full strength of the stream was persistently sought. There happened to be very few boats in sight, so that I was unable to point out the course taken by any other one as better than that we were pursuing; and thus the day was got through, and it was sunset by the time we approached Minieh, a distance of eighteen miles.

Then the meaning of the day's loss was made manifest. Abed's village and home was on the bank opposite. He naturally wished to pass the night there; and with the love of petty scheming that forms so large an element in Arab character, every means of procuring him this indulgence was resorted to previous to the simple, and

after all necessary, one of asking for it. He had taken no part himself in the farce that had been played, and the only hour during which the boat was properly handled, was when he was at the helm and Radouan at his prayers. We, of course, put him ashore, with the promise to stand over and pick him up again the next morning. The little intrigue that is constantly going on among an Arab crew is often annoying. However reasonable may be their desires, they are rarely preferred until all possible underhand means of obtaining them have been tried and have failed. Not only is every man ever ready to put forward some scheme for himself, but each one is anxious to promote his neighbours'; and the success of the intrigue itself becomes of greater moment than the object for which it has been set on foot. The result of this habit is, that the traveller without a dragoman is constantly brought into antagonism with his crew, and is tricked into denying, as we were at Cairo, what he would have willingly given if it had only been asked for, or he had known it was desired.

CHAPTER VIII.

MINIEH TO SIOOT.

MINIEH is a most thriving town, and the capital of a province; but neither its size, cleanliness, or picturesque appearance, had any charms for us now. The wind was from the north. From it and from it only could our boat draw force, motion, life; and to lose an hour of the precious power by which alone the swift Nile current could be overcome was intolerable to us, anxious to push on. The freshness too, not to say cold, of its breath added to our impatience to get south. So we spread our sails even before we drank our morning coffee, and followed as best we might the vast flocks of wild geese that were passing over us. We found the "Faithful" true as ever to his promise, waiting on the bank at the hour we had named. He had with him his wife, whose shyness was commensurate with her good looks, instead of bearing to them that inverse proportion so fortunately, as a rule, observable among women of the East as well as of the West. We, therefore, only got one glimpse of a remarkably pretty face, and then had to confine our admiration to the gold embroidery on her dress, and our interest to the chickens she brought as a present. C., taken by surprise, had nothing to give in return, so we fell back on

piastres,—perhaps, after all, the most acceptable form of backshish.

We were soon off again, but not for long. The breeze which had promised so well in the morning left us with Mrs. Abed. A breeze of taste, it had possibly gone back with her to the village, fluttering among her blue cotton drapery, and abandoned us for a day or two to the pole and the tow-rope. The progress we therefore made was slow. Occasionally a gentle wind enabled us to creep on a mile or two, and in the morning we made a little way by towing; but we had not the heart to keep the fasting men at labour after twelve in the day, and so we stopped early and travelled little. But there was small cause for complaint. The weather was perfectly lovely; as the wind lost its power its coldness also disappeared, and the temperature became that of an English fine summer's day. The scenery too was beautiful; and at last we saw the Nile as we had imagined it to be. The bank lined with palms and mimosas; here straggling, there in clumps, again falling back altogether, and giving place to some open land. In the background sandhills or rocks; having at their feet huge mounds of rubbish that once had been busy towns, or here and there a living village.

How thick was once the population of Egypt may be seen by the position as well as size of these old towns. The precious arable land was rarely cumbered by a building; and notwithstanding the inconvenience attending the living at any distance from the river, the villages almost

invariably stood on the desert hills that skirt the fertile soil. Benihassan on the east bank, notorious for its grottoes and its thieves, is particularly beautiful; and so is Antinoë of worldwide reputation, and El Berkeh. Nothing could present a stronger contrast to the groves of palms, which form their present wealth, than the hills surrounding them, full to the antiquary of riches of the past. Wizened, shrunk, and shrivelled by time, they look rather as if they had been scorched and pulverised by fire than merely worn by age. The very rocks are worm-eaten into holes, and the stones are like bricks seven times passed through fire.

On the 12th we reached the head of the great Bahr Yoosef canal. It was a dead calm, and we had an amusing scene in crossing it. The breadth of the channel was about sixty yards. With water too deep for poling, with a stream too strong for rowing, it was necessary to send a hawser across, and so warp to the other side. It took us half an hour to talk about it, almost as long to send the rope over, the same time to fix it, as much to bring it back; and after another talk of almost equal duration, we were not three minutes in hauling across. It was a true sample of Arab work: the thing done bearing no proportion to the fuss made and the time lost. The natives' mode of crossing is much more primitive. Their ferry-boat is a bundle of reeds or doora straw; the oars are the passenger's arms and legs. Those who are desirous of passing over walk to the brink, slip out of their cloths, place

them on their heads, and, embracing the straw support, take their bath and their passage at the same time. The bundles of straw seemed common property, and we saw a dozen or more people make use of them in turn.

Our halt gave us also some information respecting the habits of the river itself. As we lay against the fork of land formed by the canal on one side, and the river on the other, the eddy caused by our boat ate its way into the soft rich soil, and before we left the place, the wash had hollowed out a small bay or harbour as deep as the breadth of the boat, so that our stem and stern lay level with the line of the bank before and behind us. At this spot, in the then high state of the river, the land was level with our gunwale; and the slips, as they quickly occurred, did no more than splash our deck. But as a rule, the Nile bank is many feet above the waterline, and it not unfrequently is unsafe to approach it.

We had with us excellent maps made by French engineers, and it was our habit to mark off on them with compasses the tale of our daily voyage. But we found it not a little difficult to do this with accuracy. The river winds so much that its windings can scarcely be sufficiently shown. Constantly doing on a large scale what we had just seen it doing on a small one, it forms islands and washes away others; it changes its course, here carrying away a town, there leaving another far inland that was originally built on its bank. Of these different variations we saw notable instances near Manfaloot, the part of the river where we

now were. Where the map showed a bend of moderate dimensions, we found the course of the river describing a letter N, with compressed sides; and our boat's head was turned during the day due east, due west, and to every southern point of the compass between the two. Before night we passed three distinct old beds of the river, broad and unsightly fissures that scored the face of the rich plain they dissected; and dry, except where an occasional pond, of the dimensions of a small lake occupied a more than usually deepened portion of the now disused channels. And making fast in the dark, we heard the opposite bank falling in, a cartload at a time, as the river, eating into the alluvial soil, undermined and brought it tumbling in with a heavy crash. Manfaloot itself is half washed away, and the part remaining is threatened with a similar fate.

Gebel (*anglice*, mountain) Abou Födhr was the next object of interest passed. These hills are among the highest on the banks of the Nile, and as they actually overhang the river, they are much dreaded by the boatmen; not without reason, as we saw on our return voyage. The wind blows fiercely in these latitudes, and the heavy squalls that burst over the tops of the hills are a by no means unfrequent cause of accident.

In appearance Gebel Abou Födhr is even older than the hills near Antinoe. Here and there huge lumps, acres big, of crumbling stone seemed on the point of slipping from the crest of the mountain ridge, and toppling headlong into the water. Next we ran by a dip partly

filled up, by which the strata, clearly defined on either side, were intercepted. It looked as if such a rock-fall had actually occurred some thousands of years ago, and the fault had been since made good by a gigantic mass of conglomerate.

On the 14th we reached Sioot, after having passed some miles of navigation rendered difficult by the excessive winding of the river's course. The great strength of the Nile current makes progress very slow unless with a full fair breeze. Consequently where the river bends considerably either to the east or west much delay is occasioned. Below Sioot, as about Manfaloot, the great Nile twists and winds like any English trout stream, and constantly one carries up to a corner a fair wind, and turns to face it. Still the north wind is a good friend, and if he sometimes hits one on either cheek, he is more often ready to back one, and so in the end progress is made. With each day we found the scenery become prettier, more novel, and more southern. The colours grew brighter, the air more balmy, the light more intense, and the atmosphere more clear. The temperature rose considerably, and Fahrenheit marked this evening at Sioot, 71 degrees, at 8 p.m. Flocks of many birds were all day on the water or in the air. Vast numbers of wild geese could be distinguished at incredible distances; the swallows caught flies on our deck, while the waterwagtails stole from it crumbs of bread.

Our two servants lived close to Sioot: Girghis at Benoub, a mile or two below it; Ibrahim at Wasta, a short distance above, and both on the opposite bank. We had landed Girghis at the nearest point to his village on our way up, and we now sent Ibrahim home for the night. C. went on the ever-ready donkey to Sioot, and I remained to drink the Faithful's coffee, and take a lesson from him in pantomime and Arabic.

One is never dull on board a dahabeah. As the boat lies at the bank, and one occupies the upper deck shrouded from the sun and sheltered from the wind by awnings, no box at a theatre is half so comfortable, and few plays so amusing as the scenes constantly acted before one. All is so strange, so new, to a man unaccustomed to Eastern life; all, at the same time, so old and familiar to any one up in his Arabian Nights, or well acquainted with his Bible. The whole is more like a dream, or a play, than the too realistic life of our northern climes, with its miseries, discomforts, and wants. The men are like children, in their idleness, their vanity, desire for amusement, quickness in passion or delight; the dirt is not dirt in that dry climate; the poverty is not want; the rags are merely picturesque where the bounteous sun keeps all things warm. Then the gravity with which everything, the most trivial, is done, until with a burst of boyish laughter, it changes into boisterous mirth, as some trifling jest, or good-natured practical joke, charms the Arab from his dignity. There

land two or three of our crew, on their way for an afternoon at Sioot. The sun is setting; by the time they reach it the coffee-shops will be opened, the coffee ready, the mutton cooked, and the weary fast of the day over. Grave is their demeanour, full of importance their deportment, as they shuffle on their slippers of festivity, and throw round their shoulders the black camels' hair robe of full dress.

Hardly do they touch the shore, when the crowd of donkey boys in attendance make a rush. The reis and Mahomed, his brother-in-law, submitting, are hoisted at once on to the nearest animals, but Achmet desires to choose, and refuses the donkey almost pressed under him. At once the spirit of fun catches everything and everybody, and has it all his own way. A dozen boys seize on the tall Arab sailor, his blue robes and his black are thrown over his head, and twisted round his face. A very bundle of cotton clothes, from the corners of which vainly wave long thin arms and legs, he is pitched sack fashion on to a donkey, and is cantered off over the bank and out of sight, amid the shouts, pushes, and open-handed blows of the boys, the laughter of the sailors, and the delight of everybody, were he grave Turk or sick infidel.

Before we went to bed, Ibrahim, to our astonishment, returned; and we listened no less wonderingly to his explanation, that he had come back because he thought that we should not be comfortable without him. From such a declaration coming from such a man, one whose

disregard for our comfort was only equalled by his appreciation of his own, we, like King Cole, ventured to infer that something would occur, though not what that something would be. It was, therefore, without much surprise that, awakened about three in the morning by an unusual noise, we listened to the taking up of the transverse planks or bars, by which the hold was covered in. Some heavy bale or barrel was then moved about, and finally the bars were replaced, and we went again to sleep.

On Ibrahim's coming to me in the morning, I inquired the meaning of the unusual and untimely disturbance. Of course he denied that there had been any noise at all. "But," I said, "why was the hold opened?" "*Il banco apre!*" said Ibrahim, with astonished emphasis; "it had never been touched!" As I would not accept this assertion, he soon remembered that it had been opened, but that he had slept through the whole operation. On this, I pointed out that, as his bed lay on the very planks that were moved, he must be a hard sleeper. "Ah," said Ibrahim, nothing abashed, "*el hawager sai tutto.* Now I remember the hold was opened, and we had hard work in the middle of the night to get out the flour, that the sittee (C.) might have some new bread for her breakfast." "Was the bread made?" "Why, no; that slow fellow, that Arab, Girghis, had not finished it." Ibrahim, Girghis, and I, then had some serious discourse, during which it came out that we too had slept hard during the

early morning, for the "banco" had been opened twice,—once for Ibrahim's requirements, and once for the cook's; but nobody on board ship had, of course, had anything to do with the opening, or even knew of the disturbance. We kept our tempers, and contented ourselves with making the reis responsible for the future non-tampering with the hold. He received strict orders never to permit any provisions or stores to be taken from it after nightfall, and an assurance that if our injunction was disobeyed we would bring him before the authorities.

It was difficult to refrain from looking into the hold and flour barrel ourselves, and ascertaining the extent of our losses; but we felt that if we did so it would be necessary to turn one or both of our servants away, or that at all events it would be idle, and indeed unwise, to prove them rogues, unless we meant to take action on the proof. Besides, the mischief was done, the temptation to take white flour for presents to their friends was, as we had been told, almost irresistible, and it would not occur again until our return to Sioot. Our Copt servants we knew, would not permit any peculation from the Mussulman crew.

There are two ways of punishing dishonest or otherwise offending servants in Egypt: the Western, by turning away; the Eastern, by the stick. The first can only be resorted to by those who can do without the discharged offender; for there is no possibility, when Cairo is once left below, of replacing him. The second is always with-

in the traveller's reach, as we were informed. The Egyptian official being ever ready to oblige an European with so small a thing as the application of the bastinado to the feet of any one who had offended him. But it is a cruel punishment, and the very size of Ibrahim's feet made them inviolable in our eyes: how could we attack so defenceless and vast a space for suffering! After-events made us glad that we had fallen back on the masterly policy of inaction, in obedience to that very wise rule, —"when in doubt do nothing." If we had made any accusation against our people, Girghis would certainly have been included in it; and though appearances were against him in the present instance, he proved himself, before our voyage was over, to be a most excellent servant, and, for an Arab, a miracle of honesty.

CHAPTER IX.

SIOOT TO KENEH.

SIOOT, the most important town of Upper Egypt, contains, according to Murray, a population of 20,000 souls. The governor of the Saeed, as the district is named, resides there. The bazaars are not very inferior to those of Cairo, and among the many mosques is one whose remarkably high minaret attracts to it deserved attention. The weekly market, held on Sunday, is well supplied; and, in addition to ordinary country produce, goods of various kinds are to be had that have been sent from Cairo on the one hand, or brought by large caravans through the desert from Darfur on the other. On our return voyage, such a caravan, containing, as we were told, more than 1000 men, had just arrived, and was encamped at a short distance from the town. But the ware of Sioot most worthy of notice is of home manufacture. There is a pottery close to the town, where black and red bottles, bowls, pipes, and what may be called fancy articles, all of much beauty, are made and sold at a trifling price. We were so far unlucky in our purchases, that an Englishman had been before us on the day of our visit, and had bought up nearly the whole stock-in-trade; but the twenty or thirty pieces we brought home have been much and deservedly admired. The workmanship

is rather deficient in finish, but the colours are good, the soft material takes a polish, and the shapes, handed down from all time, are beautiful. The best pipe bowls in Egypt are made here, and amongst the curiosities of the manufacture were found some instruments the bottoms of which were rasped like a file and are used by the women for cleaning their feet.

Sioot, however, offered no attraction strong enough to detain us now, and on the 15th of December, the very morning after our arrival, we got again under weigh. Lovely was the day, soft the air, and gentle the breeze, as we slowly sailed up the pretty and rather long reach above the town. Nothing in nature foreboded the season of storms upon which we were entering. But we had committed a great mistake: we had proved against Ibrahim a fault for which we might have made him suffer severely, and had taken no advantage of the opportunity. To allow an occasion for punishment to pass unused is, in Egypt, to be weak. To be weak is the unpardonable sin; and we soon found that our authority, already shaken by too frequent gifts of mutton to the crew, had been completely destroyed by our regard for the splay soles of our servant's feet.

By evening we had only made a very few miles. As we went below, the halt for the night was ordered to be made at a village we pointed out on the right bank. The reis, for the dear sake of disobedience, immediately turned the head of the boat to the left, and brought us up on that shore.

Finding this to be the case, and reading in it the confirmation of suspicions the men's attitude during the day had aroused, we saw that the struggle for the mastership on board had commenced. So first allowing the men to finish their supper, we ordered the boat to be cast loose, and taken to the village on the other bank. This the reis soon made impossible by steering up the wrong side of a long sandbank; and he instantly followed the demonstration of the fact by declaring that it was necessary to return to the place we had already made fast at. I would not permit him to do so; and we went sailing on with a light breeze, at the rate perhaps of one mile an hour. The night was lovely, and hot as a summer evening in England; the moon only, by its extraordinary brightness, protesting that we were many a mile from home. About ten we desired to stop, but there was no village near of sufficient importance to have a guard, at least so said the reis, and we went creeping on far into the night. The fear the boatmen have of being robbed and murdered seems senseless enough. No doubt it is often simulated to induce an early stop or a late sail, as suits their convenience or love of contradiction; but it really exists, and very strongly. They would often tow the boat for a couple of hours in the dark, most dreary of work, rather than stop, except among a goodly number of other boats, or under the protection of the village guards. Though we were on board twelve souls, whereof nine were able-bodied men, we dared not make fast to the bank, except in company,

or even anchor in the middle of the river; and this not from fear of collisions, but for our throats.

During this part of our voyage there was no wind, the weather was hot for the time of year, and the thermometer stood during the middle of the day at 80° in our cabins. But the calm outside the ship did not prevail within. With the exception of the Faithful and Girghis, who did their work well as usual, and indeed did all the work that was done, the men behaved like boys at school before a breaking out. We gave as few orders as possible, determined to choose well our ground for the open quarrel that was inevitable; but each one that was given was passively resisted, evaded, contested, and only performed when the responsibility of not doing it there and then fell unmistakably on some one individual. Then the man funked and obeyed. The work of the boat was done in the most slovenly manner. Arab boatmen are at their best as bad perhaps as can well be found; but when they don't desire to please, the ingenuity of their bungling so defies description, that I will only write of them as they are in their better moods.

Absolutely without forethought, they impose upon themselves hours of hard work by their unreadiness. The oars are never in the small boat when they are wanted, and she is cast off in an emergency without them. The pull in time is never given, and for want of it the dahabeah runs out into the stream, or into the bank, and it requires ten times the labour to get her off or in again.

When they get into a scrape, as is constantly the case, or have any difficulty to surmount, they select as the course to be first tried that which entails the least labour, never that which gives the best chance of success, and it became one of our amusements to see them resort after an hour or two perhaps of wasted and useless efforts, to the means whose necessity was evident from the first, but which required at the outset some slight additional exertion.

They are enduring, however, and patient in their endeavours to set things right when they have gone wrong. What they see and have under their hand they believe. The cause that produces its effect before their eyes they understand; but they seem incapable of reason, of prevision, or of waiting for a result. They are mostly descended from the nomad Arabs, and one grows, living amongst them, to wonder how they ever became agriculturists. When the harvest was so far off the seedtime, as it is even in this climate and soil, it must have taken generations of forced labour to induce them to sow the land.

With such characters it is needless to say that none but the simplest management of a boat is possible; and that if the condition of surrounding things is in any way complicated, accidents and bungling are sure to occur. As long as the north wind blows, and does not blow too strongly, all goes well. The men can hang on to the sheet, and experience has taught them to yield to their instinctive love of ease, and let go if the pressure on it

be too great. But in calm weather, if the stream be stronger than usual, if there be anything to be done with the tow-rope, more than walking with it along the level bank, something is sure to go amiss. This would be the case under ordinary conditions; but ours were for the moment unusual. We had given when custom did not authorize the gift, and forgiven when all precedent required us to punish; and, worst of all, we did not understand each other. Driven by necessity, we were picking up a few words of Arabic, but Ibrahim was still, in any but the most ordinary circumstances, our only means of communication with reis or crew. By him everything we did was more or less misrepresented: partly owing to his ignorance of Italian; more, perhaps, to the desire to be of importance, that made him translate a request into an imperious order, a question into a complaint; but most often purposely. For he was one of the very few really vicious men I have ever met: a man who would do evil rather than good, for evil's own sake. Fortunately, he was a coward as well as bad, and fear of consequences will probably restrain him from crime. The reis was a good old fellow for an Arab, whose character C. and I sketched at this time in almost identical terms. Old and childish, charming and distracting, irascible and goodhearted, willing and hardworking, but incapable and incompetent. No wonder that everybody loves him and nobody respects him, and that each man stops to criticise his orders instead of obeying them.

The part of the river we were at was difficult, and we spent two days over about as many miles. On the first morning, as we rounded a corner soon after starting, the dahabeah, badly steered, sheered out across the stream. No one was ready to pay out a few more yards of tow-rope, and the men, pulled backwards, had barely time to rid themselves of the traces that passed from the rope round their breast, and save themselves from being jerked over a steep bank into the river. Fortunately, they just escaped, and the boat alone went headlong downwards. One of the men remaining with us sprang instantly into the felucca, but, as usual, she was cumbered with things that ought not to have been in her, and had nothing on board that ought to have been there, and, before she could be got ready, the stream carried us in to the shore. After much delay, we made another attempt, and plenty of tow-rope being given out, it was easily successful. A few hundred yards above this scene of our mischance, there was a shelving nick in the generally perpendicular bank, in which were clustered three or four country boats. The indentation, looking like a watering-place for cattle on a large scale, offered a small dead-water refuge from the fierce stream that was running outside it, and we turned joyfully in for rest and talk over the event that had happened.

Once in this haven of repose and gossip, the reis begged to be allowed to remain. "It was not possible for his men to tow against such a current; we could sleep

here in safety should no breeze spring up, for a village inhabited by men of remarkable virtue was close at hand; but this town once passed, we should enter upon the most dangerous part of the whole Nile. My book (Murray) would tell me what bad people lived thereabouts. Had not the pasha been obliged last year to shoot hundreds of them? And only a week ago a dahabeah, that stopped at the village ahead I was making inquiries about, was attacked, robbed, and two of her crew were murdered. There was not a man on board with us who would not sooner run away than stop there. The hawager did not believe in the murders; well, let him look at the stream, and remember that the men's stomachs were empty, and the men themselves weak with the fast."

I did look. We were in the deepest part of the concave side of a deep bend of the river. The bank was eight or ten feet high; as far as I could see there was no spot in it, except the one we occupied, at which a boat could have stopped. Every moment the undermined soil came crashing into the river, falling in tons at a time, and throwing the water as high as the bank-top. The stream was strong, though not strong enough to prevent us towing against it; but we hated to see the weary plodding of the fasting crew, and remained where we were, to get through, with the best patience we could, one of the few very disagreeable days we had to pass on the Nile. The weather was hot; the boats we were wedged in amongst were laden with country produce for the down-stream

markets. The bight we all lay in was also the watering-place of the women, and the bathing-place of the men; and the cackling and screaming, the gabbling and gobbling of the poultry, turkeys, and peasants were hard to bear. With the setting sun, however, the people went to their food, the flies to their rest, and we almost forgot the discomforts of the day in the beauty of an evening that was lit up by a moon and stars, such as are never seen in our foggy north, and made musical by the cries of vast flocks of geese and other night-feeding birds.

The next day was again dead calm, but as a matter of course we were towed up the stream that yesterday was declared to be impassable without wind; and when at midday we reached the village of evil reputation, I was asked to anchor, and we did so. Short as was the distance we had made, it was not accomplished without much discussion and wrangling. The incapacity of the reis was in keeping with his irritability, and on a par with the idleness of the crew. We came to a quarrel, which ended in my enforcing obedience, and on his part in the expression of a desire to put my shoe on his head, accompanied by a silent determination to continue the course of opposition on which he had embarked.

On the 19th, there was a change. The storm inboard and the calm outside of the previous days gave place to heavy squalls, both inside and out. We got under weigh rather early, ran aground, and then ashore, and by the time we were dressed, we found

ourselves running along Gebel el Aridi, with a fine favourable breeze. Soon afterwards, when at breakfast, we came to the point where the mountain abuts on the river before falling back inland. Of a sudden the boat, with a quick lurch, leant unpleasantly over, and our coffee and milk flew from the table on to a divan. From the deck there rose up a hideous noise. Everybody screamed at his highest pitch, and an Arab's voice in fear is more powerful than melodious. The sails flapped with cracks like pistol shots, and the boat rolled about like a runaway horse shaking himself free from control. We looked out at the cabin door, and saw that the sheet of the mainsail was loose, and was lashing the deck with a force sufficient to knock a man down. A heavy gust of wind had come down the mountain's side, and was discharging its fury on the river; whilst our people, in extremity of fear, were all huddled together by the side of our door. The wind screamed, the sail thrashed the deck, the water seethed in white foam, and a duo of rival prayers was howled out by our Mussulman crew and Coptic servants. For the second time in our short voyage, Saïd's aid was invoked, and a piteous wail of "*misericorde*" was sent up to some Christian saint. For a minute things looked so nasty that I told C. to push aside the table, and to come with a large air mattrass to the cabin door. This she at once did, with her habitual courage and an obedience that did her credit. But the days of the *Lotus* were not yet numbered; the squall passed almost as quickly as it

came, and, as it had driven us from under the gebel, all danger was over.

When all was made snug again we called for Ibrahim, to inquire how it came about that we had been so nearly upset. Probably he had not recovered his senses, for he answered so insolently, that, in a moment of exasperation, I caught up my stick; but he saved me from striking him. At the sight of it his face became contorted and livid; and he rushed from the cabin screaming with panic. In a minute or two I forced him to come back, and listened to his protestations that he had been beside himself with fear, and did not know what he was saying when he spoke. My fortunate explosion of temper had given us the key to the man's character. Equally deaf to kindness and reproof, the language of the stick was the only one he understood; and it was always listened to with entire submission. From this day he was a changed animal; and putting off the qualities of his type, —the Egyptian buffalo—he assumed, with occasional relapses, the character of an ordinary boor.

The breeze continued steady for the rest of the day; and but for the unpleasant feelings of distrust our escape left behind, we should have had one of the most enjoyable, as well as quickest, runs we made; for at 7 p.m. we found ourselves at Mensheh, fifty-four miles from our morning's starting point. But the difficulties we at this time found in managing our people, and the knowledge that in the incapacity of the reis and the abject cowardice

of the crew we were carrying with us a constant source of danger, not a little damped our enjoyment.

For some distance above Mensheh the scenery is peculiar, and exceedingly pretty. The higher chain of mountains falls back from the Nile in semi-circular form; inside it there are two distinct smaller ranges of hills, that nearest the river being the lowest. The narrow flat between this last and the bank is covered with crops, interspersed with clumps of palms, mimosas, and sycamores. The landscape is a vast amphitheatre: the foreground a sea of vivid green broken by islands of trees; the back composed of tier on tier of bright yellow-red sand and sandstone coloured hills. Then again the mountains abut on the river. Their face is dotted with caverns of old date, and with quarries worked for lime-stone at the present day.

The scene was a busy one as we sailed by. Hundreds of men were quarrying the stone, rolling it down the steep mountain side, and lading the score of large boats waiting to receive it. As soon as we passed from under the shelter, the breeze freshened into a strong wind; and we went staggering along with a rolling motion that was far from pleasant, and at a rate of speed that by no means did justice to our propelling power. By the time we had run by Girgeh, a wretched enough looking capital of a well-to-do province, the boat yawed about as none but an empty craft with plenty of top hamper can do; and we became convinced that, in spite of the

reassuring answers we had received to many inquiries respecting the ballast, we had taken in too little, or perhaps none at all. Not contenting ourselves this time with mere questions, we soon found that the last conjecture was the true one; and that our danger was still further increased by the stowage in lockers on the upper deck of many hundredweight of the men's bread and pulse. So many objections were raised to moving their food into the hold, and the ground—that it might be damaged or dirtied by the rats and mice—was so comparatively reasonable, that we permitted it to remain where it was; but we ordered the boat to be stopped at the next gebel, and sufficient stone to be taken on board to bring the vessel to her proper trim. The reis answered that this was quite useless, and worse than useless; for putting ballast in the boat made her heavier to tow; and that if Allah meant us to drown, ballast or no ballast, we should drown. We replied that he spoke the words of wisdom and of truth; but that Allah, we believed, helped those who helped themselves; and that if the bread couldn't go into the hold, some stone should. Cowards as these people are, they are still greater idlers; and between their fanaticism and their idleness they will sail a boat so light-laden as to be absolutely unsafe.

There now ensued a struggle between us and the crew, as to whether ballast should be taken in or not. With their usual tactics, entire acquiescence in our wishes was expressed, and every dodge practised to prevent their

fulfilment. We were running through a flat and stoneless country where the mountains fell back from the river; but by sunset we should have reached Gebel Took, who sits with his feet in the water. But the bad sailing of the boat natural to her want of trim, was aggravated by the steering; and as the sun went down, we were still some miles from the hills. The night was very cold, the result of the strong norther we had had for two days, and we went below, leaving orders to stop for the night at the nearest convenient place to the mountain, and that ballast should be taken on board the next morning. Hour after hour went by, and still we sailed on with a steady breeze. My every inquiry was answered by an assurance that the village was close to us where the reis wished to stop. A safe village; for we were in a bad country, and the gebel, not yet reached, was inhabited by fearful cutthroats.

Repeating our orders, not on any account to pass the gebel, and thinking it probable that they would be disobeyed, we went to bed. Waking at twelve, to find ourselves still steadily travelling, we could have no more doubt that the men were trying to run by the mountains in the night. I dressed, and rang for Ibrahim and the reis. The last could not understand a word of my Arabic; the first was so sleepy, that he had quite lost his small property in Italian. But I was out of temper at having to get up in the cold, and some words, emphasised with a flourish of the stick rather close to Ibrahim's nose, at once restored him to consciousness. "*Ah, non preso rabbia, signor,*" he

shouted out; and then, with his eye constantly on the stick, he quickly repeated to the reis all I had been saying. The already oft-told story was of course again recited to me. Not a single village had been passed since nightfall; the mountain had not been reached; the people hereabouts were very wicked, and the most desirable place for a halt was close before us. I gave him ten minutes by my watch to reach it, and a positive order if he had not done so at that time, to lower his sails and float back to the nearest place of safety. Within the time named we had made fast.

In the morning we were woke by preparations on deck, very quietly made, for getting under weigh. Looking out of the cabin window at the side of my bed, I saw that, as I expected, we had already passed Gebel Took, and were well within the flat country beyond. No time was to be lost. As the sun rises, so does the north wind, during the three or four days of its generally successive continuance; and if we did not get back at once, we should not do so that day. In an hour's time we should have had to choose between the loss of forty miles, and a defeat from our scheming crew. Slipping on some clothes, I summoned the reis to the main cabin. He regretted having passed the mountains by accident in the night; but it did not signify, there were others a day's sail or so farther on; we would start at once, and soon reach them. "No," I said, "go back." "Go back! it was impossible. The wind was too good to lose; the

wind was too strong to allow of our return; he could not go down stream against it, unless he lowered his yard, and it was a day's work to take this down, and another's perhaps to put it up. There were oars it was true, but they could not be used, because the hold (we had yesterday seen empty) was full; and besides, there were no stones at all on Gebel Took." It is necessary to have seen the foot of an Egyptian mountain to measure the full daring of this last assertion; but while recognising the old man's courage, I was deaf to his arguments, and even also to the pathetic entreaties that followed. "Would I only do him the kindness to allow him to go on; he would be my slave; would eat dirt before me; would live with my shoe for ever on his grey head."

Indignantly I turned him out, with directions to cast off immediately, and return to the mountain. Then, dressing as quickly as possible, I went on deck. The breeze was already blowing fresh and steady. A dark line on the river below, showed that it was coming up in force, and that in another half-hour our return would for the day have been impossible. The boat was floating broadside in the river, nicely balanced between wind and stream, and almost as stationary as if she had been at anchor. Not an oar was at work, and the men were sitting sulkily with their heads in their capotes, and backs to the wind. I ordered the oars to be instantly worked. No one but Abed moved; so walking to Mahomed, the greatest talker and worst man in the ship, I told him instantly

to take an oar, pointing to it with uplifted stick. He funked, and doing as he was bid, we escaped an open mutiny and appeal to some official free from Western prejudice against the bastinado. The other men went directly to the oars, and just as the dark line reached us, the boat was rounding to, her head close to the gebel's foot.

The old man went ashore with his crew. When a few yards off, he stopped and addressed them for some minutes; then, stooping, he filled his hands with sand, and poured it on his head. The action was easy to understand. Prompted by them, or some one of them, he had played for the mastership of the dahabeah, and had been made to eat dirt. He was ashamed of himself, or of his defeat, and upbraided them as the cause of his shame.

In a very short time the empty hold was well lined with ballast, our mooring was thrown off, and we, in very different trim, went bowling up stream. The reis came on the poop deck, and I showed him four small clumps of masts in the two or three miles immediately below us, denoting as many villages where we could have stopped in good company the night before. "Four!" said Ibrahim, at my shoulder. "I see five or six. *Non vede, signor?*" He was as blind as a bat, and could not at 100 yards' distance distinguish between a palm-tree and a lateen sail; but the reis was beaten, and Ibrahim, cur-like, snapped at his heels.

Going below, we wrote the above account of what had happened. Then calling in the reis, we showed him the record of his misdeeds, in that black and white so fearful to an uneducated man; and told him that it depended upon his future conduct whether this should be sent or not to his employer as a complaint against him. Probably not much of my Arabic eloquence reached him, and he credited me with saying more biting things than I was capable of; for my speech produced an effect that not a little shocked us. Touching my foot with his hand, he placed it on his head; then dissolving into tears, he stood wiping his eyes with the skirts of his clothing. We were exceedingly sorry for the poor old man. In spite of his tricks and his lies,—that is, in spite of his Arab blood,—his kindness of heart and dignity, as well as softness of manner, made him so attaching, that it was most difficult not to spoil the effect of our victory by an expression of sympathy. But we contented ourselves with tying up most formally the sheet of our MS., and hoping that it would never be unbound.

How clear is the sky after a gale of wind! We had been living for a week in a very tempest; and now the storm had passed, the rain had fallen, the clouds were rolled away, and in and out of the ship not a speck could be seen to mar the serenity of the sky, or dull the transparency of the atmosphere. Gaily and gracefully the boat bent to the breeze, and held a straight course in

ready obedience to the helm. Equally quick was the alacrity of every one on board to obey orders. Mahomet, the wit of the ship, who had hitherto done nothing but aggravate us by his unintelligible Arabic jokes (it is most disagreeable to see men loudly laughing at gibes one does not understand, and sometimes suspects to be made at one's expense)—Mahomet, whose conduct had been constantly idle, and sometimes almost mutinous, actually climbed the yard and helped to furl the sail; whilst Ibrahim became grotesque in his endeavours to forestall our wishes. His hitherto continuously bad behaviour had earned for him the nickname of the Ruffian. Now we were enabled to change his soubriquet, and call him the Reformed. But, alas, it was not long before, his nature re-asserting herself, he became the Relapsed; and so by quick alternations from bad to worse, and from worse to bad, he won for himself a dozen names, until he finally took rank under Mr. Bruce's Act, as "the Habitual."

On the 26th, we stopped to victual at Wishna. We were attracted by the crowds of country people and masses of country edibles, we saw hurrying and being hurried to the market. Over and above both produce and people, and representing perhaps a little of both, or at least a link between the two, were three, what our fathers would have called, Barbary apes. They gravely walked and ran by the sides of their masters, who scarcely slackened their pace to accommodate the shorter strides of their companions. It soon became known that we were

buying chickens. A fellah first tried a deäl with Girghis, who, as he asked double the market price, would have nothing to do with him, and went to the bazaar. The man, Girghis out of sight, addressed himself to us; we refusing, he sent the same chicken by three different girls, seeking to find favour in our eyes. The first two were plain, and could not sell the unfortunate pullet; but the third was so pretty that she could not be denied, and she received four piastres for the fowl, and as many more *pour ses beaux yeux*. Beauty in Egypt is scarce.

From Wishna, we had a most lovely sail to Keneh, passing through some of the prettiest country we had yet seen. Belts and rows of palms encircled the cultivated ground; and the lines of trees and the curve of the banks, as well as the plots of land, were constantly broken by clumps of palms, or by thickets of mimosas, and the fan-leaved dôm palm. The new corn was already well up, and the foreground, where the banks were sloping, looked like a green Thames lawn running down to the water's edge. The landscape, too, was set in a frame of the first mountains we had seen in Egypt. We have spoken of mountains before, taking the word from Murray, and using the literal translation of the Arabic term *gebel*; but the Egyptian hills, up to this point of the river, are in every sense cliffs; flat topped, precipitous sided, barren, and of rock formation. The mountains we now saw were sharp in their outlines, wavy in their undulations, and more or less sloping in face.

CHAPTER X.

KENEH TO ESNÉ.

On our arrival at Keneh the reis was taken ill. The poor old fellow had been sick after his evening meal, and I found him so weak that he could scarcely stand, with cold perspiration on the forehead, and a pulse barely perceptible. The symptoms were not difficult to account for. He had broken a fourteen hours' rigid fast by swallowing, as greedily as such an abstinence made natural, a handful of sweet dates, a lapful of raw onions, and a barley roll, bigger than his fist, just baked, heavy, and utterly indigestible, as only an Arab barley roll can be. Nature by a timely rebellion against such brutal treatment, freed his faint old stomach from oppression, and prepared it for a dose of Liebig and cognac, to be followed an hour or so afterwards by a couple of cutlets. For two or three days the old man continued so weak that I began to be alarmed; he could not be induced to break the fast, and it was wretched work to see him getting fainter and fainter as the day wore on. But there was nothing to be done. "You may cut my throat," he said, "but you cannot make me eat." We told him that the soup was medicine. "Not smoke, nor bread, nor water, nor medicine, he replied, should cross his lips till the day's fast was over; and if he died for want of the medicine, why it was Allah's will, and it

was good." So we had to content ourselves with making ready the soup and cognac, and administering them as soon after sunset as we dared. For it was we who gave the signal that the day's penance was over. At the large towns a gun is fired nightly through Ramadan, to let the Mussulman world know that eating and smoking may be resumed without sin. Out of reach of the sound of the gun, the men have to guess the moment of legality, unless some watch-possessing infidel is by, to save the true believer from needless fasting, or impatient fault. At Cairo, we were requested to note the minute of the gun's discharge, and every day afterwards the weaker vessels of the crew assembled in front of us, and anxiously waited for our signal to fall to and drink the coffee that was waiting, or to light the cigarette already rolled. So long as the reis was well we were virtuous, or nearly so, and would not make it 5.15 p.m., until the watch hand approached the desired quarter; but it was impossible to look at the old man's wan face, as the long minutes after sundown dragged slowly by, and not to fudge. We did so a night or two after leaving Keneh and the men were already hard at work eating, drinking, smoking, when the boom of a very distant gun floated over us with the gentle evening air. The crew sprang up aghast, the reis spat out his mouthful of food with rage, and for a moment I was afraid that they would think we had been tricking them intentionally into an offence against Ramadan. So we instantly called the

reis and Radouan, and showed our watches, which, as they did not understand they were ready to believe, in proof that the hour was the same they had told us to note at Cairo; and as it would have been useless to explain that the watches had gone fast, we fell back on the fact, that as we were some hundred miles farther south, the sun set here somewhat later. Radouan knew this, he said, to be true. Then, we added, it is clear, that the man who fired the gun took his time from the sun, and had not fired it according to the true Cairo time. He was wrong, and they had not broken their fast: look at the watch! They were hungry and content.

Extremes, somebody has said, meet. Had he wanted an example, he might have pointed to Ramadan. Here is a fast of the most trying character, made part of the most sensual of religions, and scrupulously observed by all the uneducated portion of the most material of peoples. A Mussulman's life is a constant seeking after and enjoyment of such animal pleasures as fall within his reach; his idea of a future state the supply and demand without limit of such gratifications. Yet this sensualist endures for thirty days in every year, a mode of life as different from his present one and his hoped-for future, as it is severe, trying to his health, and opposed to common sense.

We saw the effect of Ramadan in winter; but what must that effect be when, with the changing seasons, it falls in midsummer, and the long hot day has to be

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passed in a state of total abstinence! What a number of old men and of weakly men it must kill! Could this have been the intention that prompted its institution by the prophet of the sword? That thus the favoured race might be kept strong, and hereditary disease die out? If so, Mahomet was perhaps an unconscious exponent of the Darwin theory, and a promoter of the principle of natural selection.

Arrived at Keneh, we were within the Thebaid, and not 40 miles from Luxor and Karnak. Our voyage was so far accomplished, that we had reached the district whose perfect climate it was our main object to enjoy, and we determined to make short journeys, and parcel out the 400 miles still navigable, so that each day of the remaining winter should have its ration of novelty and change. So we began to start late and stop early; waiting on the breeze, and ignoring the tow-rope. Thoroughly, under this system, did we enjoy ourselves. The men were as active and good tempered as if Ramadan was over; the atmosphere was clear, and bright as it is only in this country; the scenery made up of just the proper mixture of land and water, of trees and crops, of desert and mountain.

The fellaheen differed very much from their brethren on the Lower Nile. Farther from the seat of government, they are less governed and more prosperous. They have the appearance of being better fed; their bearing is more independent, and they clothe themselves as if from a knowledge of good and evil, and not for warmth only.

Here the Egyptian winter was over. Deciduous trees are not common, but we passed some already green; and on Dec. 23, I saw one in full young leaf, that looked at a hundred yards' distance like an English thorn on May-day.

On the river near El Ballas we met several rafts, formed entirely of the earthen bottles in which the Egyptian women carry water. These Ballas jars (for, made at El Ballas, they take their name from the village) are not porous like the goolahs. Nearly two feet high, and fining to a round point at the bottom, they are carried on the head, the end resting in a roll or circlet of cotton cloth or rag. The jar holding perhaps two gallons, is, when full, so heavy, that it is often most difficult for the women without assistance to get it upon their heads. They therefore, as a rule, go to the watering-places in pairs, or in a body; but we often saw one who happened to be alone lift the jar on to the edge of the steep bank above her, and stoop to bring her head underneath it. The jar once raised is carried as lightly and gracefully as if it were nothing heavier than a chignon; and I have seen a delicate looking woman stand for five minutes at a time with this crushing burden on her head, arrested by no greater attraction than ourselves.

The jars transport themselves and owners to the down-river markets. Bound together by palm-tree fibre, they are formed into a raft two or three jars deep, and 60 by 50 feet perhaps wide. Each raft is provided with a helm and oars, fitted like the timber rafts of Europe,

but made of rough untrimmed branches, and is sufficiently buoyant to hold out of the water the upper tier of jars, and the four or five men in charge.

Our Christmas-day was spent close to El Ballas, and what a Christmas-day! It was so hot, that in spite of awnings, C. was for once driven from the deck; and in our cabins, which felt cool by comparison with the outer air, the thermometer stood at 80°. The climate was simply perfect. So we said each day; and each day, as we went further south, proved by its increasing charm that we had been rash in our assertion of the day before. To breathe, to live in it, was sufficient. So vivid was the colouring, so sharp the outlines, that we who could not draw regretted a dozen times a day that we had not with us a box of colours. Everything was so clear, that it seemed as if nothing could be easier than to fix on paper that which the eye saw so distinctly; and if a man who had never touched a pencil could use it anywhere, it would be in the Thebaid. As almost any one can speak who thoroughly knows his subject and can forget himself, so surely the most unpractised hand could express outlines so defined and colour so marked.

On the next day a gentle breeze carried us up to Karnak, and we drew up for luncheon alongside the bank opposite the ruins. Then, as it proved most difficult to reach them from this spot, we got under weigh again, and ran up to Luxor, the most convenient halting-place from whence to visit the Theban ruins. We

found there three dahabeahs, two of which I not a little envied for their size, cleanliness, wealth of comfort, and pretty lady's-maids. The wash was going on, and it was pleasant to see the white round arms doing daintily the work that we had begun to think especially the place of Ibrahims and Arab sailors. By the bye, has any one before remarked on the cunning and subtle influence exercised by soap and water on Arab temperament. Ibrahim always yielded to its softening power, and in the middle even of a break out, the Habitual became, for the tub-day, human. The change was no coincidence, but a regularly recurring fact; and as often as he replaced his tarboosh by a handkerchief, rolled up his sleeves, and girt his loins, preparatory to a hard day's work with the soapsuds, the generally irrational mule became a good-tempered washerman.

C. in the afternoon went over the ruins of the Luxor temple, accompanied by Mustapha Aghar, our unpaid and obliging consular agent, who if possible outdid his customary civility and attention in favour of a friend of Lady Duff Gordon. The high, over-high in our judgment, estimate of Arab character, formed by Lady Gordon, and expressed in her published letters, as well as her constant kindness and care for the sick and poor within reach of Luxor, has caused her memory to be almost worshipped by the Theban people of all classes. From the aghar to the beggar, nobody has any but good words for her, and few can say of these enough.

We were disappointed in Luxor. The ruins are massive without beauty, and in massiveness are far inferior to those of Karnak. The town is small, and in itself has little character. There are no trees, nothing but a sandy bank, between it and the river, and its appearance is neither striking nor attractive. Lady Gordon's house is a modern white building, stuck like a mushroom on the top of an off-part of the ruins of the ancient temple. In front of it lies the river, behind is a rubbishy courtyard, on all sides a sea of dust, and not one tree or single speck of green affords an atom of shade or repose to the eye, weary of the heat and glare, the dust and dirt. A more uninviting habitation it would be hard to find; and if evidence were wanted of the perfection of the Theban climate, would it not be sufficient to point out that such a person as Lady Duff Gordon endured the exile and discomforts of Luxor for its climate's sake.

On the morning after our arrival at this usual halting-place for dahabeahs, we were woke by a number of shots fired close by, and looked out to see the arrival of another boat. A man was dancing on her deck, and marking time by discharging the barrels of a revolver. Ibrahim was instantly knocking at the door, and begging for our solitary gun that he might return the salute. It is a common and foolish habit on the Nile for dahabeahs to salute each other by firing guns and pistols. We used to content ourselves with dipping our ensign, unless the

saluter was a foreigner, in which case Ibrahim was permitted to gratify his desire to make a noise; and the figure he cut under the mixed sensations of awkwardness, fear, and importance, was worthy the humour that drew Seymour's sketches. But if he was ridiculous, he was not safe; and I was best pleased when, as often happened, both barrels went off together, and the empty gun rendered him harmless.

Out of humour with Luxor, and finding, in our determination to see the sights on our return voyage, an excuse to leave it, we set sail at 9 a.m., and made our way to Bajoor, the port of Erment. The village opposite contained the homes of the reis and of two of the crew, and we had determined to stop there a couple of nights, in order to give the three men a holiday. Poor people! much of their pleasure in the gift was destroyed by the manner of the giving; for, ignorant at that time of how dear it is to the Arab heart to gain what he wants by trickery, and how infinitely less valuable is anything that comes of free gift, we told them at Luxor of our intention. It was hard upon them, and unkindly done. They were like a gambler who, about to play for a stake he desires much, and thinks himself safe to win, sees it made into a rouleau and handed over to him before even the cards are cut. There was no room for intrigue, and lies were rendered purposeless. Still they could be told; and on the principle that virtue is its own reward, they perhaps took some pleasure in describing Bajoor as

twenty-four miles from Luxor, and eight from Esné, as it is not, instead of being the eight miles only distant from Luxor that it is.

Towns on the Nile, which are not on the Nile, but a mile or two perhaps inland, have ports, and call them 'bajoor.' The Bajoor of Erment is a very pretty place, on the northern bank. Avenues of very large sycamores run alongside the river and far inland, giving shade and shelter to the roads that lead to Erment. On the south bank is a lovely view. A green slope fringes the water's edge. Two or three villages, standing a little back, are scattered along it, and their never-failing groups of palms, mimosas, and sycamores almost touch each other, whilst on the downstream side is a glorious background of desert and mountain.

We remained for a couple of days at Bajoor. The weather was hot: 87 degrees in our cabin at midday, and still higher on the awning-covered deck. But it was pleasant enough under the shade of the huge spreading trees; and the native passers-by with donkeys, buffaloes, and camels, gave us quite as much distraction as the heat made desirable; so we yielded a ready assent to the request of the reis and his two countrymen for another day at home. It was a mistake; it always is a mistake to be goodnatured in Egypt, and the very next day, the crew, encouraged by our weakness, recommenced the conduct we hoped they had abandoned.

Esné was only a few miles above us, and we had pro-

mised to stop a day there for bread baking. It became immediately their object to add to the promised day an Irishman's bit of one. With this view, it was necessary to stop us for the night short of Esné, but so near it that an hour or half an hour's sail the next morning should land us there. Thus, the day of our arrival not being complete, there would be no fulfilment of our promise, and they would have turned their twenty-four hours of ease into forty-six. The weather was against them, and made it difficult to carry out their plan, for the breeze was strong and favourable. Still, with a good will, plenty of lies, and Allah's blessing, all things are possible. First, the liberty men did not return in the morning. The reis came, thought they had mistaken the hour at which we had ordered a start, went in search, and in the search wasted the morning. Then, when off, the boat became afflicted with her intermittent refusal to sail or to steer. The slack water was declared to be infested with sandbanks, and to avoid the perils of the passage, it was constantly necessary to cross from side to side, and always advisable to hold a course in midcurrent. At dusk, leave to stop was asked for, Esné being still many hours' sail distant. Our map told us that this was not true; but time was no object, the country was highly picturesque, and we did not care to run through it in the dark. So we made fast, and woke the next morning to find Esné in sight, barely three miles off.

It was a dead calm; a strong stream ran down the bank best fitted for towing, and we determined to inflict a little punishment. The hated tow-rope was, therefore, ordered out, and we were slowly and laboriously dragged up to Esné through the sweltering heat. Nor did we omit to point the moral of our lesson; and the reis was told, in the hearing of his hot and weary crew, how sorry we were that they had made such a mistake yesterday about the distance, and what a pity it was that so much time had been lost, both in the start and on the road; but for these various mischances they might have all been lying asleep at Esné, their heads well wrapped in their capotes, instead of toilsomely tugging at that odious rope.

CHAPTER XI.

ESNÉ TO ASSOUAN.

If I were asked where is to be found the most perfect winter climate in the world, with the boldness of assertion that ignorance of any but a very small portion of it would render natural and justifiable, I should unhesitatingly reply, "At Esné." We stopped there for two or three days, both in going up and coming down, and on either occasion enjoyed the very perfection of weather. Neither too hot nor too fresh, and with a very even temperature, there was yet sufficient variation between the night and day. We sat on deck till bed-time, and were glad of a blanket in bed. The comparative freshness of the early morning nerved us for the heat of the day. The afternoon's warmth made us welcome the morning's cool. The light was most vivid, and yet there was little glare. In the air there was a balminess and serenity indescribable.

The town is a good specimen of an Egyptian provincial capital, and there is a charming anchoring place at the lower end of it, opposite the pasha's palace and garden. There we lay in company with two other dahabeahs: one full of some pasha's "family," as his wives are euphemistically called; the other belonging to an Italian invalid who, we were told, passes the great

part of most winters here. Esné is the last town of the cheap part of Upper Egypt. Above it provisions are not really dearer until Assouan is left behind, but as in Nubia very little can be bought, all dahabeahs about to pass the first cataract take with them provisions necessary for their stay in the black country, as the Arabs call it. Should you, therefore, be so improvident as to arrive at Assouan with a short supply of chickens or mutton, prices will be ruled by your necessity rather than by the value of the stock you require. Forewarned of this, we laid in our stores at Esné. The felucca was turned into a sheep pen, the turkey and chicken coops were prepared, and we got together for the three or four weeks we proposed to remain in Nubia a small farm, consisting of two sheep, half a dozen turkeys, and two dozen chickens. The sheep, weighed perhaps forty-five to fifty pounds, were in tolerable condition, and cost us 25 francs the pair. The price was looked upon as extravagant by our people; for a very few years since, more than 5 francs was never demanded for a sheep. For the turkeys we paid 2*s.* 3*d.* to 1*s.* 4*d.* each, according to size; for the chickens, 6*d.* apiece; for eggs, 1*d.* for six. We also laid in a good supply of grain for the poultry, and of beans for the sheep; and I began to feed these last, to the crew's great astonishment with chopped sugarcane. They ate it tolerably well, and with sufficient appetite to raise my credit with the men, who, hating all innovation, look upon anything new

to them and on all experiment as evidence of idiocy. But whether we obtained from the saccharine diet the fat results anticipated, it is impossible to say. Fat the sheep certainly got, filling out in a way most pleasing to a farmer's eye, but then beans without stint, and green barley at discretion, will make mutton though unaided by sugar.

On the morning of our arrival, the reis asked leave of absence for Achmet, one of the men who had joined us at Alexandria. The man lived at Etfoo, thirty miles distant by water, but close at hand, they said, by land, and wished to walk across and rejoin us when the boat should reach Etfoo. He wanted to see his family. Now the Arabs are an affectionate people, fond of their wives and children, but they are also fond of their ease; and as the map showed that the distance could not be less than twenty miles, it was certain that there was some reason for the request more urgent than the one assigned. By waiting we should be sure to hear it: so we refused. Then we learnt (we had not yet bought our live stock) that the turkeys at Etfoo were the only good turkeys in Saeed; that the chickens outnumbered the fleas, and the sheep were plentiful as blackberries at home in September; that Etfoo was only five or six miles distant and, lastly, that Achmet's children had the small-pox. Would we but let him go to see how they were? We said, certainly, he should go, and go at once, but he could not come back; and we went below to see what

we could find for the man that might be of use, and to calculate what we could give without inciting each of our men on the return voyage to have a house full of sick children. Before we had found the mean that would please Achmet, and not cause us to be left without boatmen, Ibrahim came to tell us that it was all a mistake. We had misunderstood the reis, and Achmet did not live near Etfoo; Achmet had misunderstood the people who had told him about his children; they were perfectly well, and his wife had walked across from the village he lived at,—a village close by, not near Etfoo at all,—and was with him now in Esné.

We then knew that we were in for a fresh struggle. Our only chance of avoiding it lay in the immediate dismissal of Achmet; but this step seemed so unjust, that it was impossible. One could not dismiss a man because his children were sick. The alternatives remaining for our choice were almost equally disagreeable. Either to carry him past Etfoo and into Nubia for a month, without allowing him to see his family, or to run the serious risk of infection, consequent on his going home and returning on board. The first was inhuman, the second most dangerous; and as we thought over the fearful consequences of the smallpox finding its way into such a ship as ours, and in such a climate as that we were in, we determined to keep it out at all cost. In doubt as to what course to take, we agreed for the moment to do nothing more than to order Achmet's immediate return to

our dahabeah; and then patiently, but watchfully, lest he should absent himself, to wait.

That night we slept quietly enough, certain that Achmet's home was too far distant to permit of his going there and returning before morning; and the next day, a light breeze springing up betimes that promised to grow into strength, we started with the intention of running by Etfoo if the wind permitted. It was just possible that the men's last story, now constantly repeated with every kind of asseveration, was true, and that the children were not ill. In this case we should go on with our journey, and Achmet would lose no more than his night's holiday at home. But if they were ill, we felt certain that he would not pass Etfoo without making an attempt to see them; and we trusted to our vigilance to detect this, and prevent his return. The breeze belied its promise, and we made no more than ten miles a day for the next three days. During all this time the Achmet drama was being acted. Occasionally he was despondent; and his bad spirits were pointed out to me as resulting from the loss of his holiday. "He was very fond of his wife; and was it not hard that he should not have the same leave that had been given to the other men? Sickness there was none. Did the hawager think that the other men would permit his return among them if he once went into an infected house? Never. They feared the smallpox; it was a devil."

At other moments he acted high spirits; and I was

asked to observe him. "Was that the demeanour of a man whose children were ill? No; he was happy because he knew that the first report about them was false." It is astonishing the joy that an Arab takes in playing a part in an intrigue. All the energies of every man on board were devoted, during these three days, to the prosecution of a scheme, whose success, if it were a gain to Achmet, would be to them a source of danger. Each man went about his business with a sense of importance that was amusing, and an excess of willingness that was in itself suspicious. And it must not be supposed that this zeal was due to love of Achmet. He was not unpopular, but by no means a favourite on board; and when they met him subsequently, Abed excepted, not a man cared to inquire how he was; and no man, not even Abed, asked after his children. Their sole interest was in the play.

To everything that was said we repeated the same answer; and with such persistence, that we finally, I believe, licked it into fair Arabic. "If Achmet left the dahabeah, if he put foot on shore long enough to get out of sight, he should not return. Any man who went away without leave should be also left behind. But when we got to the point of the shore nearest to Achmet's house, he should land, with Ibrahim and C., to find a messenger; and we would anchor whilst this man carried to his house a bundle of things we gave him to send, and returned with Mrs. Achmet. His wife on shore could

then give him on board news of his home. If he liked to return with her, he should do so; or if he preferred to remain with us, we would keep him. But though he might see Mrs. Achmet, he must not touch her." If the plot was play to them, it was work to me; for I had to get up every night to count the sleeping crew, and to make certain of Achmet's presence.

At last, on the afternoon of the 4th, we reached Etfoo; and our offer to send the messenger was renewed. But every kind of story was invented, every sort of difficulty was raised to the proposition. "The messenger would cost too much"—we offered to pay; "he could not find one; nobody here knew him or where he lived; his house was at Etfoo, close to it, half a mile off, one, two, three hours distant, fifteen miles off, and over a mountain. No; if he couldn't go home to his wife for the night, he wouldn't stop at all; his children were well, and he wanted no news of them." So we slowly passed Etfoo; and as with the light evening breeze we still stemmed the stream, every conceivable reason but the true one was advanced to induce us to stop for the night. Of course we refused, and continued our course. About 7 p.m., when we were passing, or had perhaps already passed, the nearest point to Achmet's house, the man gave in. "His children were ill; he must know how they were; would we stop?" I cannot say how pleased we were. Our hearts had been sinking lower and lower as we contemplated the possibility of carrying Achmet on,

in ignorance of his children's state, because he preferred his place to them.

It was too late for C. to land; but we felt pretty certain that the sick house was some little distance from the river, and we therefore permitted Achmet to do so. He went alone, for Ibrahim pleaded fear of the country people in the dark as a reason for not accompanying him. But as we put him ashore at a village on the bank, we promised him half an hour in which to find a messenger, the utmost we dared allow in our ignorance of the position of his house; and assured him that if in that time he had not returned, he should never put foot on board again. He would be back, he said, in a few minutes; and taking the bundle already prepared, his staff, a kind of quarterstaff of the English fourteenth century, and lastly his slippers, he landed. Then I knew that he would not come back. An Arab's slippers are for ceremony and show; a man puts them on as a matter of full dress. Achmet took them that his entry into his own house might be befitting his position of lord and master. To find a messenger he would have gone barefoot. In going home, anxious as he was, he still was mindful of his dignity.

Watch in hand we waited the thirty minutes, yet ten minutes more, and then slowly, and with well-acted reluctance, my order was obeyed, and the boat pushed off. The breeze had not fallen, and by its aid we passed across the river to the opposite bank, where we decided to remain for the night. The by-play of the reis and crew was worthy

of any theatre, and a finishing touch put by the old man was almost a stroke of genius. Some twenty people had collected on the bank, and as we pushed off, he directed them as soon as we were sufficiently distant, to represent Achmet by shouting. I had learnt enough Arabic to catch the drift of his request, and prepared C. for what was about to happen. The natives acted their part with much discretion, and we were already making fast to the other shore when supplicating cries from the bank we had left made Achmet, already some miles distant, declare that he had only been a few minutes late. For that night the play was kept up; we were asked to listen to Achmet's shouts, and greetings went from our reis to his substitute. But the next morning, with the frankness with which they always abandon and avow any lie that is found out, or is no longer useful, it was acknowledged that Achmet had gone home; "but then, poor man, he had found his house clean, swept and garnished, for his wife and children had gone to meet him at Esné; would we not therefore take him back?"

Deaf to all entreaties, we sent the reis across in the felucca with the man's kit and wages. Still we were sorry to lose him, for he was a willing and untroublesome hand, and we could not but sympathise with the affection he showed for his family. The part played by the reis, it was much more difficult to forgive. It was his duty to see that our orders were obeyed, and he entered *con amore* into the man's attempt to evade them.

We could not but feel that it was owing to our captain's weakness and want of truth that we lost Achmet. But for this the man might have seen his wife on the shore, and gone on with us or gone away, as he thought fit; but supported by the reis' connivance, he tried to do more than we could safely permit, and lost his place.

This affair concluded, the willingness to obey and anxiety to please of every one on board exceeded description. Punishment had been inflicted, and Ramadan was over. And how the men ate!

We wished that the animals had appetites on the same scale, for food was cheap and they were thin. What mutton, what fat turkeys we should have had! Every hole and corner of the boat was filled with grain of different sorts, and in different forms, stored for the sustenance of our farm, our servants, the crew, or ourselves; and it was our evening amusement to land the animals and feed them. They soon knew me as well as their caretaker, Abed; and the carrying ashore and arrangement of my litter was the signal for a bleating, cackling, and gobbling, that would have done credit to any English farmyard.

When the coops were opened, and legs were untied, a general rush at me was made; the sheep jumped from the felucca, chickens and turkeys flew from the ginnaym, or garden; and I had to use my stick, sometimes even roughly, to clear my cushions and legs from obtrusive sheep and too familiar poultry.

Poor brutes! it is something of a drawback to dahabeah life that one is obliged to eat one's pets; and the mixed feelings with which one regards their increasing size and well-to-do look, are in keeping with the general contrast and contradictoriness of human nature. For the turkeys our sympathies were less lively. They were such stupid brutes in life, and so excellent on the table, that one found it quite reasonable to take pleasure in their rapidly increasing bulk, solely from a gourmet's point of view. But the sheep were so big, and did so enjoy their barley and beans, that their transformation to mutton was long delayed, and we went ten days without meat before we could order the dissolution of their partnership. With the chickens it was impossible to deal so tenderly. Man must eat to live, and he readily sees the necessity of supporting his own existence. A reprieve for the sheep required therefore a sentence on a chicken, but we carried with us two silver-grey pullets, which were particularly good-looking and tame, up to Wadi Halfeh, and down again to Alexandria. The occasional eggs that were found in the coop were always placed to their account, and purchased their escape from the cook.

In this part of the Nile we fell in with large flocks of locusts. When first we saw them I happened to be looking up into the deep blue sky, and their flight caught my eye at a height that in England would render a swallow scarcely distinguishable. But so it was with everything in that clear atmosphere. Stems of trees,

limbs of animals, stand out sharp and defined, at distances which at home would preclude the perception of more than a general effect. In Egypt, it was possible to see the legs of an animal, where in England a guess would be required to give name to its indistinct form. So too with the colouring. The greens were green, and the blues were blue,—true, deep, vivid, and unmistakable; and the reds, the gold, the orange of the sunsets were brighter and more decided than the colours in the transformation scene of a Christmas pantomime.

The locusts had peculiar habits. They seemed always moving in the same direction; and at this part of our voyage, their ravages were confined to one bank of the river. For miles, the crops on one bank were eaten more or less. Perhaps at one spot, down to the very roots; and yet the land where the attractive strip of crop had grown, seemed still alive with the all-devouring insects; whilst of the patches on either side of the favoured plot, one would be only yellow from their attacks, and the other so little damaged that the mischief done was not perceptible. On the other side of the river not a locust could be seen, nor a trace of one detected. We tried in vain to account for the apparent capriciousness of their taste. It was not any particular crop that was preferred: at one place the plague had fallen on the barley, at another it had alighted on the lupins, and in a third a plantation of palms was covered as if by a cloud, whilst the corn

underneath was apparently untouched. The crew told us that the green spots that stood out among the general waste had been preserved by the care of their owners, and occasionally we saw a whole family engaged in driving off the pest with palm-branches; but more often the oasis lay unguarded, inviting by its freshness an attack, that from no cause we could discover, the locusts seemed loath to commence.

Respecting such matters as these,—the habits of the animals peculiar to or best known in Egypt, the names of birds and fishes, of plants and trees, indigenous to the country, in all subjects in short connected with natural history and the state of things existing—we greatly regretted to have no book of reference. It is time lost to seek, in Murray, information on any such subject. His account of the antiquities is as admirable, his information respecting the tombs and ruins and ancient kings is as precise, as the little he does say of Modern Egypt is undecided and contradictory. He is so taken up with what happened 3000 years ago, so full of corrections of the assertions of other antiquaries, that he can find scant room to deal with subjects of present interest; and whilst the position of every grotto in the land is indicated, no mention is made of such impediments to navigation as the locks at Atfeh or the bridge at Kafr é Zayat.

We were now in the land of crocodiles, and our anxious watch for *temsah* had been kept up for some days. On

the morrow of our departure from Etfoo, I was basking and dreaming on deck as usual, thinking of nothing more particular than the pleasure of living, too occupied with looking, admiring, and doing nothing, to feel the want of newspapers, or regret the restriction from books imposed on my eyes by the vivid light, when I was quickened into life by shrieks of "Temsah." "Where, where?" "Look, look!" said the reis; and there, there, pointed every finger of every man on deck. And sure enough, close to us, so near that we could have almost hit him with an oar, swam and dived and swam, hemmed in between us and the land, perhaps ten yards distant, a wretched little brute about the size of an alligator in the Zoological Gardens. With shouts and yells we drove him before us, and apparently out of his senses. So demoralised was he, that when in the water he tried to scramble on to the land, and when on the land he fell back into the water; and it was three or four minutes before he finally sank, and we saw him no more. The next day, as we crept along the bank with a light breeze, Zenati, the ship's boy, was told to swim ashore, and bring off a bundle of green corn for the sheep's dinner, in exchange for one or two piastres, to be given to the native engaged in pulling it for us. There is no hardship in such an order in Upper Egypt, and little preparation is required to execute it. More perhaps here than lower down, for the people began to clothe their extremities as a protection against the heat. Felt skullcaps were

universally worn, slippers frequently, and drawers had become almost common.

Zenati jumped into the river and had swum half way to shore, when the twin of our yesterday's crocodile was seen sliding off the rocks. The usual scream of "Temsah, temsah: hough! hough! hough!" was given by all the men, and the boy and the reptile, equally frightened, swam for a few yards close together, as if swimming in a race. We were a good deal astonished at the foolish ways of these so-called baby crocodiles; but it was not till a few days later, when we saw one of the same species on land sufficiently close and quietly to be enabled to have a good look at him, that we found out that the animal palmed off on us as an infant crocodile was a full-grown lizard of large dimensions and great stupidity. This beast, named by the Arabs, *woiran,* is so exceedingly like a small crocodile, that it is not easy for a person who has seen neither, as Pat would say, to distinguish one from the other; and the Arab sailor, availing himself of their resemblance, invariably points out a woiran as temsah, to the traveller new to the Nile. A Nile boatman likes to make things pleasant; and in this particular they often reminded me of a Kerry fisherman I once had, a charming fellow, of amiable character and doubtful veracity, who, on my reproaching him one day for the exceeding incorrectness of some statement of his that I had incautiously acted on, answered, with injured innocence in every tone, "And sure didn't I

know that your honour would like to think it was so!"

We saw in Nubia a stuffed specimen of the woiran, about four feet in length, offered for sale as a crocodile, and the two which afforded us so much excitement were neither of them much less in size. It is an article of faith, or at least of assertion, among the Arabs, that woirans and crocodiles are brothers. They declare that out of the same batch of crocodile's eggs both one and the other reptile is hatched.

That night, January 4, we stopped a little below Hagar Silsilis, and laughed at a fellah who warned us not to leave our flock in the felucca, nor to tie them for the night on the bank within reach of temsah. Crocodiles abound in this part of the Nile, but those we had seen, as we thought, were not of a kind to attack live sheep when within a few yards of a dahabeah. Our men, however, acted on the peasant's advice, and brought the livestock on board for the night. The next morning we saw that they had reason. Soon after starting, the reis shouted "Temsah," and pointed to a sandbank half a mile ahead. We looked, and saw what appeared to us to be a ridge of black earth left by the subsiding inundation, two or three feet high, and more than twenty feet long. It seemed far too big to be any living thing.

However, as the reis persisted that the mass was temsah, we steered across to the sandbank. When as close as we could get for shoal water, perhaps within 100 yards, the

crew shouted, but nothing moved. At last the gun was fired; and then, to our amazement, the ridge got on its legs, and a crocodile big enough to have swallowed the sheep, the felucca, and say half the dahabeah at a gulp, slid into the water. He was the very picture of one to be seen on the binding of a book in the railway stalls, who is probably now standing at King's-Cross Station, opening, without effort, his mouth sufficiently to receive in it a full grown royal Bengal tiger. The Habitual assisted the illusion by assuming the expression of the escaping hero, and acting fear to the life, he let off by accident the second barrel of the gun, to the imminent danger of the men surrounding him. Half a mile higher up, we saw another somewhat smaller monster.

This day's sail was a charming one, a day of infinite variety. First we passed Hagar Silsileh, "the mountain of the chain," as Murray translates the name; adding, that Arab tradition records the stoppage of the navigation of the river at this spot by means of a chain. It would seem just as likely that the name was given figuratively, and dates from the days when the first cataract was encountered at Silsilis, and the mountains of the chain had power to hold up the whole waters of the Nile, and throw them back on Ethiopia. It was, according to the highest authority on the subject, Sir Gardiner Wilkinson, about the seventeenth century, B.C., that the rocks at Silsilis gave way, and the channel of the Nile above became permanently lowered. There is no evidence to show the

exact difference in level immediately above the chain occasioned by this catastrophe, but Sir G. Wilkinson found masses of old alluvium close to Philæ that must have been deposited by the Nile in its inundations, previous to the carrying away of the dam at Silsilis. This flood guage stood on an average twenty-eight feet, and at the highest points ten feet more, above the high-water mark of the present greatest rise. Fertile Ethiopia was turned by the convulsion into a desert, and probably no such permanent and vast a change was ever effected so instantaneously on the face of the earth as that wrought by the bursting of nature's dam at Silsilis.

At the present day, the scenery in this part of the river is full of interest. The Nile narrows at one point to 1095 feet. The river faces of the mountain, or rather of the ridge that would be more correctly described as a low range of sandstone rocks, are studded with grottoes, ornamented by sculpture, enriched with hieroglyphics, and pocked with extensive ancient quarries.

Immediately above the broken gate lie some large sandbanks, the favourite home of crocodiles, and bad must be the luck of any ordinary traveller who goes by and finds them tenantless. Small people often see more than big ones; and crocodiles, according to newspaper correspondents, are among the things hidden by their suites from empresses and princes; but to single boats they almost always show themselves, and we were fortunate enough to see several, both in going up and coming down.

The sandbanks passed, we ran into the very desert. Not even a fringe of green separated the margin of the Nile from the red sand. Then again we sailed between gardens rich with green corn, and shady with palms, showing under the glowing sun in a contrast of marvellous beauty with the background of barren rock and sand of burnished gold.

A little further on, and we came upon Kôm Ombos.

The position of the ruined temple is grand in the extreme. It is said to have once stood in a plain of alluvial soil; it is seen now perched on a high rock, that juts out, seemingly a kind of rocky spur, from the desert, and meeting the full current of a long reach of the Nile, forces it to turn abruptly to the left. The ruins are not only massive, the characteristic common to all Egyptian ancient buildings, but are remarkable for their beauty. The façade of the temple, looking up stream, is formed of columns with fine capitals. It stands on the pinnacle of the spur, almost overhangs the river, and is most imposing. We stopped about a mile above Kôm Ombos, and as in the clear light night, we gazed dreamily at the temple, and thought how grand was the effect produced by its solid architecture and sharp outlines against the deep blue sky, it required no great effort of the imagination to forget the waste of time, to efface the marks of ages at that hour scarcely visible, to restore the ruins, and to repeople the scene so unusual to our Western eye with the ancient kings, priests, and

slaves, it had lately dwelt upon in the sculptures at Silsilis.

Another morning's sail brought us to Assouan. It was the second day of a strong norther; and even at this distance from the sea, 750 river miles, its breath told a winter tale of frost and snow. It carried with it, too, if not a mist,—that in Upper Egypt would be impossible,—a dulness, a want of clearness of atmosphere, such as in a greater degree an east wind spreads in England, blurring the landscape, and causing one to see all things as through a veil, dimly.

The approach to Assouan is particularly picturesque. For some miles previously, a consciousness of a change in scenery and colouring had been creeping over us. The sand was becoming warmer in its tone; and the rocks, dark and calcined-looking, were the rocks of Nubia, not of Egypt. Each hundred miles of southern progress makes itself felt, but about Assouan there is a still more marked alteration, and one seems to have stepped at once from a temperate into a tropical country. The fiercer and straighter rays of the sun leave a deeper impress on everything they touch.

Sakias, too, the Nubian waterwheels, made their first appearance on the scene, announcing a change of country and of customs. We were in the land of irrigation. As flint and steel, when brought in contact, set tinder all afire, the sun and Nile, when made to act together, give all-producing power to Egypt. Wherever the river flows,

and wherever its water permeates, there is verdure and fertility, food and life. Beyond the influence of the quickening element is sterile sand and barren waste.

Away from the Nile bank the Egyptians convey the enriching water by various means. There are canals, such as the Bahr Yoosef, very rivers from their source, that spread their arms like the branches of some giant tree, till their strength is spent, and the last drop they carry is licked up by the thirsty soil. Their course is marked through the land by villages and towns, by flocks and herds, by corn and dates, and by cotton and sugar plantations.

A more primitive instrument of irrigation—perhaps one of the oldest of mechanical contrivances—is the pole and bucket of the shadóof. In Egypt it is universally used, and in construction is most simple. An upright, say eight or nine feet high, is fixed in the bank. On it a long pole is balanced. At the short and inshore end is a lump of clay, equal in weight to the bucket when full of water, that hangs on the longer and river arm. The peasant standing in front, depresses the bucket till it fills, then by the aid of the earthen weight, he lifts it to the level of his chest, and by the same action empties it into a trough, that carries the water backward to the land, or to another and another shadóof that will raise it to the necessary level. The shadóofs are often worked in pairs, and we saw once as many as six pairs ranged in tiers on landings one above the other. Each man made an

average of eight lifts a minute. How many myriads of gallons must be thus drawn annually from the Nile?

The sakia, a more lazy method for obtaining the same end, is Nubian. A wheel, enclosed in a tower, is placed on the summit of the bank. A palm-fibre band encircles it, and lowers and raises, as the wheel revolves, a number of earthen pots into a conduit beneath, that leads the water to it from the Nile. The whole is like a rough dredging machine, working perpendicularly, and raising water instead of mud. Ensconced in the shade of the tower, the idle owner sits and flogs his working beast—cow, ass, or camel.

For two or three miles below the town the banks are unusually fertile, but Assouan itself is set in a frame of more than ordinary barrenness and desolation. Immediately before it lies the island of Elephantine, a mosaic of vivid green, golden sand, and black syenite; but on the left bank opposite rises a high hill or mountain of sand, and on the right the town is shut in by confused heaps or small hills of syenite and granite, tossed about in all directions, as if marking some fearful convulsion of primeval nature. The toe of the island comes down below the town, and as the traveller's boat runs up, he sees before him the main but not navigable arm of the Nile, here running deep, there foaming among hidden rocks or huge uprising black boulders. When almost level with the island's foot, the boat is steered to the left, and enters the deep but comparatively narrow channel on which

Assouan stands. But even this is so cabined, cribbed, and confined by rocks, that the view does not extend 200 yards upwards from the mooring ground of dahabeahs, and as his boat is made fast, it requires neither guide-book nor dragoman to announce that the cataract of the Nile is reached.

CHAPTER XII.

ASSOUAN TO PHILÆ.

We had no wish to remain at Assouan. Indeed, there is little to tempt a sojourn there, except that it is within four or five miles of the far-famed Philæ. An advantage that is without attraction to those who pass the cataract; for Assouan is at the foot, and Philæ at the head, of the rapids. The greater part of the up-country produce is disembarked at a busy village opposite to the island of Philæ, and transported by men, donkeys, and camels, to Assouan, where it is again embarked. The first visit to Philæ is generally made by a donkey-ride across this portage. An ascent of the cataract is impossible without the aid of the sheiks of the Shellal, as the cataract is termed, and these men have learnt from Europeans the value of time. Their mode of estimating it is, it is true, the reverse of ours, for whereas we pay for speed, they charge for delay. The longer the time spent in making the passage, and in arranging for the attempt, the greater is the appearance of difficulty; and difficulty adds to their importance, thus increasing the price to be exacted for their services. Besides, the more days that a dahabeah is detained at Assouan, the greater are the opportunities offered for discussion; and discussion is another word for the consumption of coffee

and tobacco. It thus generally happens that two, three, and even four days are wasted in making the preliminary preparations; and two days are almost invariably consumed in the ascent itself, which should be an affair of five or six hours. But we were in luck. A dahabeah had preceded us; the chiefs had appointed the very day after our arrival for the conclusion of their bargain with its tenants, and as it suited their convenience to take up the two boats on the same day, they came from it to us. Our morning of the 7th of January was therefore spent in doing "bazaar" with the sheiks of the Shellal.

The scene was novel, curious, and most disagreeable. Human nature in a very low form, dirty and repulsive, swaggering and tawdry, bragging, lying, and cheating, can never be pleasant to look on; but it becomes thoroughly odious when one is brought into personal contact with it. As soon as we received the sheiks, three or four in number, our boat was invaded by a dozen smaller men with an army at their back, all smoking, spitting, talking, lying, gesticulating, and watching for an opportunity to rob. Our servants and crew, aware of their habits, had placed everything thievable out of reach, and three or four were told off to keep watch and ward over the rest of our goods. Hard put to it not entirely to lose the occasion, one man betook himself to stealing the chickens' corn. I saw him doing so, and he saw that I saw him; so when I sent the faithful Abed, who was chicken-tending, to remove him, the stolen pile was

suffered to slip from his cotton gown, and fall behind him. This little experience should have warned me to be careful in my dealings with his chiefs; but though I was equal to the valet, the head knave was too much for me.

It was settled with our reis, after much palavering, coffee, and tobacco, that 205 francs should be paid to the sheiks. But the amount was to be handed over in various sums of guineas (*i.e.* Napoleons), taralis, francs, and piastres. After making up the several little piles, and counting them over and over a dozen times with the reis, he brought in the head sheik to receive them. With him the reis again went over the count, but the tale was not right or could not be understood, and I was asked to explain it. Foolishly, I consented to go over the account once more, and on this occasion with the sheik, through whose hands the money had already passed several times. Of course a Napoleon was missing, and feeling that remonstrance could not but be absolutely useless, I paid it without a word.

The next morning the fair wind indispensable for the ascent came up the river at breakfast-time, and by ten we had cast loose our sails. If yesterday we were invaded, to-day we were taken possession of. A crowd of Arabs of more or less authority, with more or less clothes, but each with a tongue and an equal power of using it, clustered on our decks. The sheiks were accompanied by their Nubian boys, whose duty it was each to hold his master's pipe, to

fold the robes of state he laid aside when he commenced work, and generally to enhance the dignity of his appearance. The young fellows whose work, as we afterwards saw, called them to pass an hour or two in the rapids, watching the ropes, guiding them between and over the boulders and crags, slipped out of their clothes, and hung on to the stays on either side ready for a plunge. Three boys, of about fourteen or sixteen, manned the felucca, and rowed in front, carrying a warp in case of need, and thirty or forty men, part of the teams that were to draw us up the rapids, cumbered the decks, making the old boat sway from side to side with her unusual freight, and scarcely leaving us room to sit. Many and great indeed were the remonstrances made at our remaining on board. It was not usual, it was not safe, it was most dangerous; but our English obstinacy prevailed, and we had our own deck cleared of all but the sheiks in command, their boys, and the one or two men whose services were required.

The English dahabeah, to whom we were indebted for our non-detention, preceded us; and as she went by, the sight of her deck, far more crowded than our own, reconciled us to our own numerous company. In a minute or two we followed, and passed between the walls of rock that had hitherto concealed from us the approach to El Shellal. This passage is far more curious than beautiful. Misled by the term cataract, we expected to look on a very different scene. What we did see was a big river

split into half a dozen different streams by rocks of various sizes, and by small islands of black syenite, granite, and sand. Round and between these islands the river ran in tolerably quiet and occasional very heavy rushes of water, but perpendicular fall there was none at all until the head of the rapid, four or five miles distant, was reached, and we floated beneath El Bab, or "the gate." Murray puts the height of the fall here at five to six feet; but for his authority I should have placed it at not more than from three to four at the utmost. But it is difficult to estimate the height of a fall which to the eye scarcely exists as a fall at all. For the rush of water though El Bab is so great that its proper weight forces the wave out of the perpendicular, and the water behind, driving before it that in front, levels the fall into a shoot. The enormous pressure and power of the current is shown distinctly on the rocks. On the shore, and in the river course wherever they stand above the level of the ordinary inundations, they closely resemble lumps or masses of slag fresh from a foundry and seen through a magnifying glass: jagged, sharp, uneven in edge, and deeply corroded in surface. But where they are commonly reached by the water of the high Nile, they are rounded, smoothed, and polished, till in shape they are like the skulls of Mammoths, and in colour a Bond Street boot.

Our course was very circuitous, twisting and turning among the rocks and islands. Now we breasted a stream, now we cut across one in what, at first, appeared a very

haphazard manner, but we soon saw with really no little skill. The work was ticklish, for though we had a good steady little breeze, it was very insufficient to force us up various steps or stages where the generally heavy stream obtained the dimensions of a rapid. As the last of the six or seven we passed of these was reached, the warp attached to the rocks ahead by our felucca's crew was brought on board, and the towrope got out and manned.

At times I could not help unpleasantly speculating on the possibility of the ropes breaking or being chafed and cut by the knifelike rocks over which they were constantly passed. The consequences of such a mischance might be very serious; and it was some relief to see two of the urchin boys squatting on the deck beside us, for articles so precious as the slippers, sacks of robes, and large amber mouthpieces they carried, would assuredly not be left in danger.

Whilst such thoughts as these were passing through my head, my attention was attracted to the boat preceding us. It was about 200 to 300 yards ahead and had been gracefully, after the fashion of a dahabeah, bending its long lateen sails to the breeze, as it slowly forced its way head to current, when suddenly it began to perform some most extraordinary evolutions. Under some powerful influence it spun round, and I saw its sails taken aback, and almost instantly righted by the complete description of a circle; then again taken aback, I thought it was coming headlong down upon us;

when, equally without apparent cause, the sail was again righted, and the boat brought up with her side to the bank, and her head upstream. We had barely time to remark how satisfactory it was to see that a boat could spin like a top, and sustain no damage, when our men, working with greater skill, brought us up alongside her, and then together we passed in safety the scene of her eccentric motions.

It was 2 o'clock. We were at the foot of El Bab, and the Arabs refused to let us through until the morrow. They had no sooner gone, than the Englishmen travelling in the other dahabeah came on board. They told us that the gyrations we had witnessed had been caused by the slipping of their warp at a critical moment, and had been attended by considerable danger. Their boat was at the instant at a spot where two heavy streams, rushing from different sides of some rock islands, met. These converging currents struck the dahabeah, first on the bow, then on the stern; and the bight of the warp slipping from a rock, she was rendered perfectly unmanageable. Their men manning the tow-rope had, to save themselves being pulled into the water, let go; and those on board, powerless to help themselves, had become as white as an Arab can be with fear. It certainly was extraordinary that a boat of the size of a dahabeah could be whirled round in the manner I have described, in a channel not more than sixty yards wide, and be kicked, as it were, out of it into slack water, without touching any

of the numerous rocks, or sustaining the slightest injury.

The scene that afternoon was most strange. The two boats had no sooner been made fast than the Nubians dispersed and disappeared. Each man went on his own way. In that waste, paths were not; and their tracks, no sooner made than to be effaced by the drifting sand, crossed each other in all directions. The silence that ensued was in almost startling contrast with the continuous noise that we had endured from their shrill voices for so many hours. The roar of the numerous falls and rapids surrounding us, so soothing in itself, acted after the excitement of the day like an insufficient opiate; and it was some hours before our nerves calmed down. The spot we occupied was desolate and weird in the evening light beyond description. No trace of any green thing was in sight; all around was a chaotic mass of sand and rock; this tortured into forms outlandish or fantastic; that, lying in waves or cones or mounds, as the fancy of the wind, tired of its plaything, had thrown it down and left it. Our men, tired or stilled by the influence of the place, were for once quiet and silent. Not a bird or insect seemed to live in that utter desolation; and the hoarse voice of El Bab seemed a mournful accompaniment rather than a break to the lifeless silence.

About ten the next morning the sheiks and their followers came to our side, and some further preparations were made for the ascent. Yesterday they had contented

themselves with seeing that the ballast we had taken in at Gebel Tookh was thrown overboard, and floating power thus acquired for the horde of savages who made holiday and accompanied us. But to day it was evident that the people who knew "the gate" held it in greater respect than we were inclined to do. Much less noise was made; the orders given were practical and obeyed. The forward part of the dahabeah was lightened. The quantity of provisions and lumber, which I had often unsuccessfully endeavoured to get removed from the deck above our cabins, was stowed away below. The spare sails, cordage, anchor, spars, the men's bread, our sheep and poultry, were carried across land to a point above the fall. We were repeatedly requested to follow them; and the example set in this respect by the travellers in the other dahabeah was pointed out as customary and proper; but I feared the walk far more than the fall, and resumed with C. our yesterday's post in the centre of the upper deck. Our companions started first. There is a slight rapid immediately below El Bab, which we respectively passed; and as we reached the head of it, we saw the other boat hauled up and into the more formidable fall. By a slight mismanagement of the ropes her stern suddenly flew out across the stream; and she made one or two heavy rolls, shipping a good drop of water before she was again brought back to the side. The sight of this pointed out by our reis was too much for C.'s ebbing courage. Struck with a sudden panic, she answered

the reiterated request that we would go ashore with eager acquiescence; and I was placed in my litter on a rock close by, from whence, perhaps, we saw the proceedings none the worse, and certainly with more safety.

El Bab is, as I have said, a heavy surge of water rather than a positive fall. Fall of course there is, and possibly in low water to the extent of the five or six feet given it; but when, as it was now, the Nile is high, the rush of water is so great, that the fall is planed down into an incline. The fall is the greatest on the west side, and gradually lessens across the channel until it becomes least close to the east bank. This, of course, is the point chosen for passing the boats up; and they are held as close as possible to the bank by ropes attached to the bow and stern quarters. By these guide ropes she is held in, and directed by two others at the bow; the sheer force, or rather weight, of fifty Arabs haul her upwards; and her sides are protected from injury against the rocky bank by a line of men from stem to stern, who, with hands, shoulders, and feet pressed against her, act as living buffers, holding her off and helping her upward progress. If all goes right she never leaves the shore. In the case of our fellow dahabeah, the stern quarter rope had been clumsily slackened, and a wave of water eddying off a rock had caught and slewed her partly across the channel; but the rope was immediately hauled upon, the boat was brought back side to shore, and no mishap

occurred. In a minute or two more she was forced up the fall.

El Bab was passed with screams of triumph, and our turn arrived. Everything went so well with our lighter boat, that the ascent seemed the simple work we had yesterday anticipated it would be; and our satisfaction at seeing our dahabeah safe above El Shellal was a little mixed with mortification that we had not remained on board. There she went easily and safely by us, black with screaming Arabs; we, surrounded by a hundred more, each shrieking backshish, had laboriously and not without risk to scramble for 100 yards over rough and treacherously polished rocks. Here in a backwater lay the felucca; and getting into her, the boy crew rowed us by a roundabout channel up into the main river, where we found the *Lotus* awaiting us.

It is difficult to estimate the amount of risk to be encountered in going up the cataract of Assouan from the experience of a single passage. One is told by some that the Arabs are unskilful and without organization; and that the ascent, really difficult and dangerous, is made light of by the sheiks, so that the weaker-spirited may not be deterred from attempting it. Others declare that danger does not exist, and that the difficulties are exaggerated by the same sheiks in order that they may increase their demands. To me it appeared that if the ascent be properly managed, there is no danger, and but little difficulty; but that any neglect of the necessary pre-

cautions would make the ascent most dangerous, if not impossible. Such neglect is not, however, likely to occur. Murray tells us that the sheiks are responsible for the safety of the boats they take charge of. This may be so, but many are lost on the down passage; and I was unable to hear of any occasion when a penalty had been enforced against them. They have, however, every inducement to do their best in the profit they make by the venture, for too many losses would infallibly prevent ascents; and it seemed to me, on close observance, that they not only did their best, but that they did it well. We are so apt to associate silence with discipline, that we think noise necessarily implies confusion, and that the screams of a subordinate show disregard to the orders of his chief; but I thought that, through all the rush, row, and riot made by the mob in and out of the boat, order and method really prevailed. Three or four different sets of men were told off to separate and distinct duties, the same men evidently performing the same task on every occasion; and over each of these gangs presided a sheik. All were set in motion and kept in hand by the head sheik; and though everybody gave his advice and his commands, those only of the chief in the first instance, and of the subordinate sheiks in the second, were attended so. Their orders were well and instantly obeyed.

The particular service in which skill is perhaps most of all essential, was performed in a manner worthy of all

praise. The safety of the ascending boat depends on the proper management of the warps and tow-ropes. It is often necessary to send the tow-rope forward, or from one bank to the other, where it is manned as occasion requires. The current is, however, so strong in places, that it would overpower the men but for the aid of the warps, and it requires some judgment and practice to make these fast, and to cast them off at the respectively fitting moments, and no little dexterity and strength to disentangle and free them when they are caught in the rocks above or below water. These duties are entrusted to the boys in the felucca, and to three or four active young fellows with big chests and lithe limbs, who remain with the dahabeah; and they are most admirably executed. The small boat was managed with astonishing dexterity. She crossed with a rush the current where it was strongest, took advantage of the eddy caused by any friendly boulder, and was forced through the stream where it could not be avoided. So quick were its movements, so ready its turns, and constant its progress, that it seemed instinct with life, and resembled a fish or an otter at play on the surface of the river. Equally wonderful were the feats of the older lads, though we saw less of them, for they spent as much time under the water as in it. When it was necessary for one of them to get to a rock, cropping out perhaps of the centre of the rapid, they avoided the strength of the stream by a dive. So at least it appeared, for diving under the current's rush, they traversed it so quickly, that one

could only imagine it avoided. Their obedience too was as prompt as their skill was great. No dog on river bank ever left his master's hand quicker at the word of command, than I saw one of these young fellows dash into the water at the order of his sheik, to unfasten a guide rope, that, drawn by the current into the rocks, had got caught at the bottom. With a plunge he went from our deck into the hissing stream, right into the very foam of it; in a moment more he had reached the spot, dived like a duck, and we were free.

These same boys will, for a piastre or two, pass down El Bab as often as desired. Seating themselves astride of a log of wood about six feet long, and sufficiently buoyant to support them waist high out of water, they ride it with the seat and gestures of a Newmarket jockey, and with hands and feet keep it straight with the line of the current. The fall is shot with an ease and grace that does away with the sense of danger one would otherwise feel at seeing a man hurried along amid such a boil and turmoil of waters; but arrived at the bottom, they have a hard struggle to induce their horse to turn out of the course. To do this they avail themselves of the impetus acquired by the log in its shoot, and throwing themselves full length upon it, they seem, with a sudden stroke from the left leg and arm, to drive it and themselves out of the current. To fail in this would be dangerous, even to Arab swimmers. Immediately below, lie ugly rocks, on which the heavy stream breaks with fearful violence, and

it was amongst these that an Englishman who, some years since, attempted the descent in the native fashion, is said to have lost his life.

On our return to the dahabeah, we found her still thronged with Arabs. As the readiest way of getting rid of them, an immediate start was ordered, and we went into our cabin. As soon as we were under weigh, all noise ceased, and I opened the cabin door, expecting to find the boat clear. To our disappointment, the lower deck was still black with natives, and the upper one contained all the sheiks of the Shellal, with their attendants. It was best to accept the situation; so I laid down as if perfectly content with things as I found them. The Arabs seeing this, became impatient, and at the sheik's request, the dahabeah was brought up to the bank. The rank and file then disembarked, while the sheiks took a formal and reluctant farewell. Not a sign would I give of understanding their silent demand for more—the mute appeal for backshish that was expressed in every action of each and all. At last the boat was clear. The whole throng ascended the bank and went a few steps away; then they stopped, and in an instant, without word that I could hear spoken, or signal that I could see given, sheiks and men returned with a common rush and a general scream. Every arm was thrown up to heaven, and "backshish, backshish," was yelled by every mouth. Never did the chorus in the Huguenots when the poignards have been blessed, return to the footlights with

more theatrical rush of feet and swell of voice. The *coup* took me by surprise, but missed the effect it was intended to produce. To have given would have been to expose ourselves to incessant extortion; and when our reis preferred the request of the Nubians, I told him to give what he pleased for himself, but not a piastre for me. Accepting the inevitable, the sheiks turned and walked off, each to his own home. A general dispersion quickly followed, and we were left in peace.

But the breeze had fallen, the sky showed signs of a heavy southern storm, and our position in such a contingency at the head of the cataract, and without any shelter from the wind, would have been disagreeable if not hazardous. So we got out the tow-rope and proceeded to track. Our course lay up a small branch of the Nile, about as big as the Thames at Walton. There soon came down upon us a swarm of Nubian imps of ages varying from six to nine. These urchins went through every action made by their elders at the cataract. Stripping off their scanty clothes with extreme gravity and immense pretension, they wound them turban fashion round their heads, and swam backward and forward thus laden through the river. When the dahabeah came to the bank they eased her off with their tiny backs placed against her side. The tow-rope they lifted over the stones, clearing imaginary entanglements. At one place the uneven ground hid our crew from sight, and nothing could be more ludicrous than the effect produced by ten little potbellied niggers

ranged in a black line along it. The biggest boy acting as head sheik, beat time and his fellows; who, apparently the only crew, sang a better chorus than their fathers, and hauled on the rope with as great pretence and as little real effort. A slight favourable breeze springing up, the tow-rope was brought on board, and our imps during the process, gave us their version of the poignard scene. Their appeal for backshish was answered by the gift of twenty paras apiece, and it was too much for their heads. They actually forgot to ask for more, and still carrying their clothes on the tops of their shaven little pates, they danced out of sight with yells of delight.

In a few minutes we came in sight of Philæ. The approach to the island is very striking. Colossal masses of rock, shaped and fashioned as if by man, rise up in every form and in all directions. On every side nature has piled up walls and columns that well might be the ancient ruins of some Titanic temples upheaved in old gigantic strife. Amongst such a chaos, the river winds so greatly, that as one opens a fresh reach, it is not easy to guess on which side lies the exit from it. After one or two abrupt and hidden turns, Philæ itself comes into view. The first feeling the sight produced in us, was one of disappointment. The surrounding masses of rock are so cut, and so many have the appearance of hewn or partially fashioned stones, that the size of the real ruins is somewhat lost. Then, too, time does not in Egypt lend to stone the softness of hue and depth of colour so

soon acquired by all buildings in our variable atmosphere.

So conservative is the climate of Nubia, that the lines and edges of the blocks still standing, are as sharp as if they had but yesterday left the mason's hand, and on those that are thrown down, every mark of his chisel is distinct in its incision. Wonderful as this is, and interesting, as giving a better record of ages so remote, it destroys the beauty of ruined architecture. Then perhaps, we expected too much. The damage done by faint praise, is as nothing to the completeness of injury inflicted by over praise. How often has one enjoyed by anticipation all the pleasure to be derived from person or thing, and with the unreason of human justice resented by unfair depreciation the exaggerated estimate of their merits previously entertained.

"Here we go up, up, up; and here we go down, down, down," is a rule of universal application, expressing the average, the balance, which prevails in human affairs, whether of general or private interest. A law, by virtue of which the most sanguine man is also the most despondent; and public opinion with proverbial fickleness, hastens to drag in the mire the idol it has once unduly exalted.

We had read of Philæ as the most charming spot on the Nile, and that it must ever be associated with all that is full of beauty and repose. To rank it so highly seemed to us possible only to a man archæological to the tips of

his fingers. We who preferred nature in existence to Egyptian buildings in ruin placed above it in order of beauty, half a dozen other places; and as to repose, there was none there for us. During the three days we remained, a northern gale raged with uninterrupted violence, filling the air with storms of dust, that dulled the light, eclipsed the sun, and destroyed our tempers. Unused to discomforts from weather, we became fairly abusive. Was it worth while to come 800 miles south of Alexandria to make sandpaper of our lungs, and hear our eyelids grate as we shut them?

The desert dust is shamelessly obtrusive. It covers one's clothes, fills the pockets, powders the hair, and gets between the shirt and the skin. It inserts itself between the leaves of unopened books, and steals into the works of one's watch; and at the end of a desert storm, it may be almost literally said that no part of one, inside or out, is free from it.

Ibrahim soothed us with assurances that never in all his experience, had he seen such weather on this side the cataract. He spoke the truth, for he had never been there before; and it certainly was exceptional, for we saw clouds, when the dust permitted anything to be seen, that seemed to threaten rain some time perhaps in the next year, and we actually heard a clap of thunder.

CHAPTER XIII.

PHILÆ TO KOROSCO.

THERE were assembled at Philæ three other dahabeahs, and our time there, owing to the dust-storm, was passed more with their owners than among the ruins. We consoled ourselves in the observance of our general rule, to keep the sights and lions till our return, by the unusual pleasure of a good talk and some old newspapers. Watches were compared, and guesses made at the right time after the manner in vogue on the Nile. Great of course was the divergence if measured by minutes, and an amateur scientific gentleman undertook to put us right by a lunar observation. As he proved, however, that the sun set at 6.45 p.m., we refused, in the presumption of our ignorance, to credit his calculations, and fell back each on his own dust bedraggled watch.

Colonel C., of the *Gazelle*, called my attention to a number of watercourses to be seen on the east bank for many miles above Philæ. On his return from the second cataract, he had landed to examine them. Many smaller watercourses lead into them; and from their general appearance, and notably from the absence of sand in their bottoms, he concluded that heavy rain, probably brought by the monsoons from the Indian Ocean, fell annually, or nearly so, on this the eastern bank. On the western bank,

he saw no such torrent traces. As Murray states that no rain falls in this part of Nubia, and our men said the same, we kept on our ascent a careful look out for any signs of it that we might detect. The watercourses mentioned by Colonel C. were easy to be seen. Their bed could be traced from where they seemed to have forced their way through the clefts in the hills that line the east bank of the Nile, and their course was deeply marked almost down to the river. At the point of their embouchure into the Nile, was a delta composed of sand, soil, stones, and immense blocks of granite washed down from the mountain side. There could be no doubt that these fan-shaped tongues that projected into the river at almost right angles with the bank, were the work of torrents, and of very heavy ones, caused by sudden and tropical rains. Washed clean, too, as they were by the subsiding inundations, they had all the appearance of being the work of a storm of yesterday; but I did not observe a single case in which the bank proper of the Nile was not intact, and did not separate the commencement of the Delta from the torrent's course inland. In the face of the bank lay the same granite boulders that could be seen on either side of it, but partially covered and concealed by many feet of alluvial deposit. It would be interesting to know whether this deposit is the work of tens or hundreds or of thousands of years. To me it seemed the latter, for the torrent beds were so deep, and the boulders in them so vast in size, that their appearance

could only be caused by rains of the heaviest character, and such a fall could scarcely be denied by Murray or unknown to our crew. This probably is only one of the many instances in which time in Egypt seems to have slept for tens of centuries.

On the morning of the 12th January we left Philæ in company of the dahabeah which had made the ascent of the cataract with us. The wind for that and the next two days remained so light that we had only reached Gertassee, twenty miles from Philæ, on the evening of the 14th; but the time was most agreeably passed. Coming into Nubia we had entered upon a fresh scene. The people, the country, and even the climate were new to us. This last was hotter and softer than that we had left; perfectly enjoyable, but not so stimulating; coffee and tobacco seemed the natural pastime of the hour, and it became somewhat an exertion to eat one's dinner.

The country's aspect was much changed by the substitution of granite and syenite for lime and sandstone. A change which begins, as already mentioned, just below Assouan, but is not seen in bulk until Philæ is reached, and the strip of land between it and Assouan, the territory of the cataract, which is neither Nubia nor Egypt, is passed. Another new feature, of greater importance to the beauty of the landscape, was, that the banks of the river had become less high and more sloping. In Egypt one sees, as a rule, the bank and the mountains behind, —the immediate fore and the distant background. In

Nubia, the view embraces also the middle distance. The river, too, was straighter in its course, inclining to the right or left in gentle curves and slight inflections, rather than with the rectangular bends that in Egypt rarely permit more than a mile or two of the Nile to be seen at once, and often made us think that we were sailing in a saucer, from which there was no outlet. I have never seen a more lovely river reach than the one we were now upon. It cannot be less than fourteen or fifteen miles in length. In all that distance it is never straight but neither does it ever bend so much as to break the line of sight and shut out the continuous silver thread of the river's light. On either side was a sloping bank of vivid green, running in a wavy line, and broken here and there by masses of boulder stones—dark granite and black syenite. Between them flowed, in graceful curves, the grand Nile, from two-thirds to one-third of a mile in width, stretching out as far as the eye could reach, and giving that idea of something beyond the range of sight, of that infinity, which, if it be full of perplexity to the human mind, is also replete with hope. Here and there were dotted about the villages of mud, shaded each by its grove of palms, and high sakias clad in green stood well above the bank. Higher still, the ruined temple of Gertassee reared its ancient columns against the sky, and granite mountains set the whole landscape in a frame as purple as the most purple of Scotch hills.

In the people the change is no less great: in race, in

manner, colour, hair, voice, and language they are distinct. The dress, too, was different, always in shape, often in material.

The women were remarkably handsome in figure. Their beautifully rounded arms and magnificent busts were set off by the fashion of their clothes. One arm and shoulder was free and uncovered; the folds, or long sheet of cotton, which composed the dress, were caught from front and back on the other shoulder, and fastened by a silver ornament; the centre part was wrapped loosely round the body, and the ends were used at will, now as veils, now thrown round the neck, or suffered to hang down as they fell. But their features were less pleasing than those of the Egyptian women. They tattoo their faces, plaster their hair with a mass of castor-oil and mud, and their whole persons reek so much of this product of the country, that even the silver rings and bracelets they offer for sale are unbearable until they have been again and again washed and rewashed. Their passion for ornaments is great. Silver rings and bracelets of native workmanship, and exceedingly pretty in design, cover their rounded wrists and taper fingers, and call shame on the hideous Birmingham brass and beads that outrage their necks, ears and noses. But the bad taste of the present century is, I fear, more precious in their eyes than the good shapes of old, handed down to them by constant repetition from the days of Rebecca, or long, perhaps, before she wore gauds. The silver was readily

taken off and offered for sale; the brass was a decoration not to be parted with.

The children have little in common with their parents, except dirt. Pot-bellied, shrivelled limbed, eyelashed by flies, they sit astride of their mother's hips or shoulders, and excite pity, mingled with astonishment that such distorted little objects should ever grow into finely made men and women.

But it must not be supposed that all the Nubians are as well-made and grown as these I have been describing. We passed in about this part of the river several tribes, differing from each other as widely as they varied from the Egyptian Arabs. On one day, when the distance made by our boat was not more than six or eight miles, we saw three sets of people, whose races seemed absolutely distinct. Of the first, the men and women were equally well-made, a concurrence as unusual as it is happy. Many a race is distinguished by the beauty of its women, as by the size and power of its men; but it more rarely happens that the same tribe can boast excellence in both sexes. The second were small, illgrown, and showed on limbs and skin taint of blood and traces of hereditary disease. The third were a race of Arabs, with shape and features approaching the classical Egyptian, and utterly distinct from the Nubian tribe. How is it that such small colonies of different people, living side by side, locally close together and separated by their habits from all intercourse with the outer world, should thus for ages

preserve their distinctive marks, never intermarrying or interbreeding? How is it, too, that though so few in number, they can breed in and in for centuries, and yet, as in the first instance I have given, retain so much perfection of physique?

On the 16th the north wind reached us again, and by the 17th it had cooled the atmosphere almost below the degree of lazy comfort. We made in the two days a distance of sixty-four miles, and traversed some very beautiful scenery.

Running out of the long reach I have tried to describe, we entered a gorge where the mountains pressed on the river from either side, and reduced its breadth at the throat to perhaps 200 yards. This passed, we came on three or four miles of scenery that much resembled the centre rapids of the Assouan cataracts. But desolation and aridity did not here entirely prevail. The mountains were tossed about in most fantastic forms and shapes; but in the tiny valleys between their feet lay small oases, and crops of corn, already two feet high, clumps of palms, and thickets of mimosa, hid in brilliant or metallic green the black granite and yellow sand. In the centre of the pass the river spreads out on either side of an island, where are the ruins of a fort and town, said to be probably of Memlook time. At the southern or upstream end of the gorge stands Kalabsheh. The ruins are of some size and more beauty, and a line of grand sycamores grows between them and the river. Imme-

diately above this the scenery is less attractive, the hills are more regular, monotonous in colour and uniform in shape; but the great river, pouring down to meet you in fine reaches and grand curves, is ever admirable. The changes on the bank too were frequent. The corn-fields, trees, and villages, repeatedly gave way to the barren desert, which ever and again had forced its way between rich fields of plenty, and poured its hungry sand into the very Nile.

Then Dakkeh was reached, and once more we entered a country, rich to live in, and interesting to see. Numerous villages standing on the bare hills beneath the mountains, looked upon the green corn and palm plantations that lay between them and the river. These mountains were most picturesque in form, position, and colour. Pyramidal in shape and dark in hue, they stand detached from each other, each in his own bed of golden sand; and we could not help thinking that they might have served as the models of the great Pyramids of Ghizeh, so nearly did they resemble those unsolved problems. Was it possible that in times unknown to history, and untold of, even by tradition, some wave of invasion had swept from south to north; and that the conquerors of the rich plains of Lower Egypt, weary of the dead level and comparative uniformity of the Cairene flat, had sought to imitate the hills of their native country, and by the hands of the vanquished race built up the Pyramids,—at once a monument of their greatness, and a witness to their love of home!

The northerly breeze was as usual followed by a spell of calm, during which the weather was hot and our progress small. On the 18th January, we stopped opposite Sabooa, where a ruined temple stands a little back from the river on the left bank. The water was so shallow on that side that it could be only visited in a small boat. We remained on the right bank, and as the green corn grew down to the water's edge, and large trees standing above gave us shade and shelter, we gave up a day for the family wash.

The inhabitants of the town close by are Bedouin Arabs, who earn their bread by trading with the Soudan. The women came down to fetch water from the spot we lay in, and the men brought us knives, spears, and shields for sale; we sat on the bank doing nothing, and thoroughly happy in doing it. About sundown we had a theatrical performance. Several Arabs made their war toilette with some ceremony before us. Their loose clothes were either well girt or laid aside; a large knife in a leathern sheath was fastened to the left arm above the elbow by a ring also of leather. On the same arm a shield was fixed, and the right hand grasped a reed, the fiction of a spear. When so accoutered and ready for the fray, they went along the bank, and in most expressive pantomime showed how they searched the desert for their enemies, or in turn concealed themselves, and laid in wait for them. Then they separated and fought each other; the spears were thrown

and received upon the shields, and finally peace was made by the payment on our part of a piastre indemnity.

C. the next day went into the town, and was quickly surrounded by ladies of high and low degree. More or less rich in ornaments, they were almost equally redolent of castor oil. They envied her the possession of a watch, pitied sincerely her want of a nose-ring, and her gloves were a source of unbounded astonishment. "Were they her skin, and had she a skin on her hands of a colour and texture different to that on her face? No! Then had she two skins? No, again! Then what could they be? and how did she wash with them? and how did she eat, and what did she eat?" In spite of the great diversion created by this last inquiry, they were not satisfied until the gloves were taken off, and it was not till they had been passed round, turned inside out, and C's. hands had been well looked at and touched, that they seemed to feel assured that there was nothing uncanny about the arrangement. This tribe had little in common with the Nubians we had lately seen, except the use, just mentioned and not to be overlooked, of nose-rings and castor oil. The oil, however, was not used in quite the same manner. The Arab pours it on her hair, and suffers it to drip from thence on to her shoulders; the Nubian moistens with it the dry mud of the Nile, and with the paste thus made, fixes her hair into rows of long sausage curls that hang stiffly down her face, after the fashion of the head-dress worn by smart shop-keepers' daughters

thirty years ago. Nose-rings are not becoming; large enough to cover half the mouth, and sometimes to rest on the chin, they are hung in one nostril only, and when the ladies, not being *en grande tenue*, do not wear their jewels, the precious ring is taken out, and the hole in the nose filled with a plug of wood.

The next morning, a Bedouin, said to be a mighty hunter, brought us a hare as a present. This mode of sale precludes all making of "bazaar," and consequently costs the recipient rather dearly, besides placing him in some embarrassment both as regards the kind and amount of backshish to be given in return. We gave a small quantity of powder and shot, at the Arab's own request; and so pleased was he that he brought us another hare before we started the next day, and followed us twenty miles up the river with a third. Powder and shot are more valued in these distant lands than piastres or even beads, and it is well to take an extra supply of ammunition for the purpose of giving away.

The hares were excellent. Shorter and thicker than the brown hare of England, their fur was in shading and quality more like that of the Scotch blue hare, and in colour it matched closely the sand of the desert. Their ears were broad, and as long as those of a lop-eared rabbit. One we measured was seven inches in length.

Our men brought also a chameleon on board. This beast in the quaintness, the squareness, or rather longitudinalness, of its shape, and the antediluvian character of its

appearance, is peculiarly a thing of ancient Egypt; and one cannot, at the first sight of it, help wondering whether, just awakened, it has not stepped down from among the sculptured figures on some tomb or grotto. The one we had was seven or eight inches long, in shape like a lizard, with flattened sides, and with legs perhaps an inch and a half high, that carried the body well off the ground. The colour, generally green, changed its hue to that of whatever the animal might be standing under or upon. The change was gradual and slow like its movements. So slow indeed were these last, that the creature seemed always standing still, and it often required attentive watching for a minute to see a single step made. Throughout the whole sixty seconds, the leg was moving with such even deliberation, that at no moment could any actual movement be detected. In this manner the chameleon approaches the flies on which he lives, and when within perhaps a couple of inches, he shoots out a long tongue and licks them into his mouth. The foot, unique in shape, resembles two hands set almost palm to palm on one arm, and the animal laps them round any small branch he may choose to travel on. We tried hard to make a pet of our chameleon but he would not thrive. Food was plentiful: there rarely is a lack of flies in plague-stricken Egypt, and he caught and ate them; but his sides grew flatter and flatter till they resembled two planks, and after three days of captivity on our deck he disappeared.

Yet another natural history curiosity was brought to us

at Sabooa, in the shape of a Nile turtle. It was an ugly-looking, flat, thin reptile, about double the size of a soup plate, and great as was our curiosity to know whether he would turn into "turtle," we had not the courage or the stomach to try him. He refused, too, to die, and lived, as Ibrahim told me with such cruel glee that I almost struck him, for two hours after he had been "*ammazzato.*"

But Sabooa has a far higher claim to notice than either hares or chameleons. It is the centre of the land *par excellence* of sunsets. The sunsets of Egypt are nearly always beautiful, and the after-glow especially is of surpassing loveliness. But the sunsets of this part of Nubia as far excel those of Egypt, as the sunsets of the Riviera exceed in beauty any we see in England. Who can describe the softness of tone, what words can paint the gorgeous nature of their colouring! The afternoon before we reached Sabooa, we chanced to stop in a reach that ran east and west. Some light fleecy clouds floated in the western heaven, and extended overhead in small flecks scarce larger than big snow-flakes. When the sun was below the horizon, these clouds were dyed with shade upon shade of colour the most brilliant and glorious conceivable. To the north the bank, somewhat thicker, was of a deep plum colour; to the west the clouds, rippled like the sands of the sea, were of a brilliant ruby red, with an underlining and lower skirt of golden orange. Above our heads and to the east, these various hues were reflected again and again, and the river

acted as a gigantic mirror of Venetian glass, stained orange, red, and purple. In the south, nature, that greatest of artists, threw in as a contrast the sobriety of that limpid blue, so soft, so clear and translucent, so full of repose, and yet so bright that out of it there seems to come forth light,—that blue which is only found on the tops of mountains, or in those desert countries where the air is so pure as scarcely to restrain the sight, or have power to fill and swell the lungs.

For the five or six days we were in the neighbourhood of Sabooa, both in going up and coming down, such sunsets as these were seen every evening, and I gather from other Nile travellers that the setting of the sun is, in this district, nearly always exceptionally beautiful.

On the twenty-first we reached Korosco, something more than one hundred miles distant from Philæ. Our progress had been very slow, owing to the calm weather and our laziness, or perhaps enjoyment would be a more fitting word. How could one wish to hurry through such a country, or haste to shorten one's stay in Nubia's perfect climate! All we cared to do was to change the scene of our nightly bivouac, and we were more inclined to deprecate any force in the wind than to woo its breath with sailor's whistle. Our days' journeys were therefore generally performed in the laziest and sleepiest of manners, and only once, shortly before reaching Korosco, were we woke for a moment from our apathy. We were towing, when we came to a small ledge of rock that ran

out as a spur from the bank, and caused a strong stream to eddy off its point. As the bow of the dahabeah entered this, and the weight of water struck it, the men were in an instant pulled backward, and in another the rope was snatched from their grasp, and we went at the mercy of the current hurrying down the stream. Less fortunate than when a similar accident happened to us in Egypt, we were carried a full mile before our men regained control of the boat; and when we once more reached the dangerous point, it required the united efforts of the crews of three native trading boats and of our own to enable us in turn to pass it.

These Barabra boats, as they are called (Nubia is Barabra in Arab tongue), are of the same shape and fashion as the dahabeah of Egypt. But, something shorter in build, and higher at the bow and stern, they resemble some vessel of the 16th century, with high ends and shallow waist. They are generally crowded with Ethiopians, and a boat of our size would often carry a crew three times as numerous. The Nubian is born in a poor country, and entertains for it that strong affection so commonly felt for the land or person that gives little in return. Often obliged to seek out of it his means of subsistence, he stores up every piastre that he can win in Egypt, and hurries back to spend it at home. The traders' boats, generally light on their upstream voyage, will always give him a passage on easy terms. As long as the wind blows he finds a seat on deck, where

he smokes, chatters, and sleeps with his fellows and the crew. When the breeze falls he lands, and, leaning on the towrope, helps the boat's ascent to the extent of his weight. Thus we often saw ten to twenty men towing a boat no bigger than our own, whilst the whole crew sat at ease on the deck. Good-humoured and good-natured fellows they were, always ready to give a hand by day and at night; and their fires, songs, and tomtom, when at a little distance, added much to the picturesqueness of the scene.

CHAPTER XIV.

KOROSCO TO WADI HALFEH.

FROM Korosco the great road to Shendy and Sennar leads across the desert in almost a due southerly direction, and rejoins the Nile between the fourth and fifth cataracts, at Aboo Hamed. The river in the interval has made a great bend to the westward, and has in retracement of its steps run southward no less than a degree and a half. Most of the caravans to and fro the south start therefore from Korosco, and we found the banks of the town well lined with merchandise. Among the stores were gun-carriages, carts, and many bales belonging to the expedition of Sir S. Baker. No harm could occur to any goods in that dry air; corn and dates, beans and calico, all alike lay out, fearless of rain or dew.

The Nile between Korosco and Derr changes its usual direction, and runs S.E., so that to ascend this part of the river the boats have to turn their heads in the teeth of the prevailing wind. The distance between the two towns is about fifteen miles; the channel is impeded by numerous rocks and sandbanks. One bank is rendered almost unapproachable by shallow water; the other, high and steep, is lined by a single row of a tree armed with a prickly thorn, whose roots on one side grow into the desert, on the other stretch into the water. The use of the

tow-rope is thus made doubly difficult. The branches catch and check it; the thorns wound the men's feet, and tear their bare legs. This part of the river, therefore, causes great detention, and is much dreaded by the boatmen.

We found assembled at Korosco a fleet of Barabra boats, and no less than four other dahabeahs. The early morning was dead calm, and we sent our cook ashore for meat. But at 8 a gentle breeze sprang up, a breeze from the south-west, as unusual as it was welcome. Great was the noise and confusion; the whole fleet at once got under weigh, we with our accustomed tardiness last of all. Everybody's all sail was set, and away we went. Everybody's cook was ashore, for rumours, this time true (the words of truth, banished from Egypt, still exist in Nubia), had reached us of beef. Beef, a thing undreamt of since Cairo was left below us!

So as we ran along the shore, we saw the *chefs* of the fleet, meat-laden, running too; and the Barabras' also, disturbed on their various errands or idlings, seeking in crowds to catch up their respective boats. At first the boats easily beat the men, but soon an awkward bend brought us up so close hauled that we could hardly stem the stream. Then much jockeyship ensued, and every reis sought to coax his boat clear of the rocks and his companions. Some took to their tow-ropes, and these we slipped. Rejoicing in our better luck, or as we called it judgment, we had passed half the fleet, when a large dahabeah ran aground in front and inside of us. It was

impossible for us to pass her, and equally impossible for anything to pass us. Being in shallow water, we were able to hold our position with the punting-poles; but we could not pole against the stream, it was too strong; we could not tow, for she lay between us and the bank, and the wind was not favourable enough to allow of our running by: so our sails were furled. There she stuck, and there we stuck, and everybody else in a line stuck behind us. As the fitful breeze veered a point or so, more or less in our favour, Radouan proposed that we should watch our opportunity, and try to sail by. The reis called him a fool for his pains, and we waited. Then as the dahabeah ahead could not be got off, the patience we had so largely of late been cultivating, vanished, and I ranged myself on Radouan's side. Soon we saw a darker ruffle coming over the surface of the river. "Make sail!" was cried, It was well done and handily done, and we sailed by the impeding boat, and right up the river at the head of the dahabeahs.

Emboldened by success, we then took advantage of the slant of wind to cross the river to the windward side. It held good till we had reached the slack water under the towing-bank, and we looked across to see every boat of the fleet to leeward of us, and on the wrong side of the swift Nile. It was great fun to all. We were delighted, after Western fashion, to win a race, to beat anything or anybody; the crew, as men of the East, to enjoy the fruits of victory in lessened toil. But enthusiasm is contagi-

ous; our high spirits infected the whole crew, and when, immediately afterwards, the wind died away, the men, with the old reis at their head, jumped ashore with the tow-rope, and spite of trees and thorns we reached that evening the end of the dreaded reach, and stopped the head boat of the whole fleet.

Everything is, however, soon balanced in this world, and it is best perhaps when the bill for success, which will surely have to be paid sooner or later, is paid quickly. Our account was soon settled; for if on one day we beat the fleet, on the very next the fleet beat us. The dahabeahs, whose masters have generally less time on hand than we had, got under weigh betimes, and when our breakfast was over, about 8.30, we saw that they had been towed up to within a mile of us. As we were looking at them, sail after sail was loosened, and the first breath of a fair breeze fell on our cheeks. As quickly as possible we got under weigh, so also did the Barabra boats, which were now close up to us. In a moment a Nubian regatta had been extemporised; it was a very pretty sight. We were in the elbow of a bend where the river resumes its ordinary course. To the south we looked up the fine reach that leads to Derr, to the north-east down to Korosco. The dahabeahs were coming up to us in a cluster, hand over hand, their large, long, and tapering lateen sails bellied out with a strong breeze, that drove them gaily up the stream. Close behind us were eighteen Barabra boats

just feeling the coming wind, and bending thankfully to each puff as it gave them life and motion. For a short time we led, then one or two of the larger boats passed us, and soon we found ourselves in the ruck. One by one they came up, carrying a better breeze with them, and for some minutes we formed one of a line of four, who, by this time going at full speed, rushed abreast up the river, with their yards almost touching. For a little while we held our own; then one of them, as big again as we were, came surging against our quarter, and drove us on to the boat on our other side. Before we had recovered the shock we had become the last of the line, now no longer drawn across, but down the river's course; and then, alas for our pride! one by one all the larger boats came up, stood level with us for a moment, and then sped by. After an hour or so we were joined by the two largest dahabeahs, the *Stella* and the *Pelican*. Grand boats, three or four times our size, their long pennants floated over our yard, and they dashed by us much as a thoroughbred canters past a struggling pony.

It is the custom on the Nile for travellers to rechristen the dahabeahs on hiring them. A mode probably invented and still kept in fashion by the dragomans or boat owners. Our companions in the cataract's ascent had been asked to do so, and to pay £5 for the expenses. They thereupon, of frugal mind, though on pleasure bent, abandoned the name they had chosen, and their boat was distinguished as "the nameless one." The custom, however,

is commonly observed, and as the work done by the Arab painters is not as good as their prices are high, the boat's stern and quarters bear each frequently a different name, in graduated degrees of self assertion. Thus the *Stella* proclaimed her shining character in two or three languages. But the Italian star was in the ascendant, and the French *Estelle* waned under a cloud that hid away its brightness. The *Sun*, eclipsed by a similar mist, made way for the big lettered *Pelican*; and the *Sindbad* showed that he had once been christened *La Marie Amélie*. As for ourselves, we carried with us the name of *Panther*, and called our sleepy boat the *Lotus*.

The breeze did not last more than a day, and the next morning, one by one, the few boats who had stopped to sleep below us went by, towing. Dahab was in despair. Dahab was our pilot. It is customary to ship at Philæ a Nubian, who takes charge of the boat to Wadi Halfeh and back, and receives for the job the not exorbitant sum of 60 francs. It is, therefore, but natural that he should desire to earn his money and get home. But we had read in "Attractions on the Nile," by the Rev. T. Smith, a book to be recommended to any one curious in the natural history of birds, that the author had had the greatest difficulties in overcoming his pilot's dislike to progress. Dahab, on the contrary, turned frantic at the calmness of our weather, bored us with suggestions of early starts, and urged the men to get out the tow-rope. His conduct was rational, but tiresome, and not in ac-

cordance with what we had been led to expect. At last it occurred to us that we, too, might adopt the means possibly used to curb the impatience of the pilot we had read about. Was it not possible that the dragoman of Mr. Smith, paid at so much per day, had not been disinclined to lengthen a little the passage, and by a trifle to swell his profits, but, mindful of the pilot's interest, had used all-powerful piastres to make it run with his? So we did a sum. First reckoning our average rate of speed, and counting the miles to be traversed during the term of Dahab's contract, we came to the conclusion that an ordinary passage from Philæ to the second cataract and back would occupy twenty days. At 60 francs for the trip, the rate of pay for such a time tallied about with the value we put on Dahab's services. Then we tried by questioning to see if our calculation was approximately correct.

This was more difficult. There is nothing more difficult than to get information on the Nile. Travelling without a dragoman, we were probably less taken in than the generality of travellers, or, when taken in, we were seldom led astray on the beaten path. But every book on the Nile must be full of errors. The time spent in the country is too short to enable any one to reach the truth. To every question the answer is given which the man replying thinks will best suit his own interest. Ibrahim, during the time he was called the Ruffian, used to answer "*Perche?*" to any question I asked, and of which he did not see the object. Passing into the reformed stage

he ceased this rudeness, and answered, "*Non sai,*" his Arab rendering of "*Non mi ricordo.*" The reis, for the same reason, never knew anything, unless he knew, or thought he knew, what it would be best that he should know. It often amused me to put questions without showing my object, and to see the anxious manner in which our people searched about for any clue that would help them to an advantageous answer.

As might, therefore, have been expected, our inquiries as to the ordinary length of the voyage from Philæ and back helped us to no safe conclusion. Dahab, paid by the job, was in the habit of performing it in less than no time. Our men, paid by the day, had always spent on it as many weeks as Dahab had hours. So we fell back on arithmetic as the surer guide, and told Dahab that we would give him a backshish of half a tarali for every day over twenty that the voyage occupied. The effect was instant. From that time forth no Nubian had ever more dearly loved a calm or hated work than Dahab. We stopped when we liked, started as late as we chose; he and the crew, we and the farm, were equally pleased to get ashore and lie under the trees.

The day after this agreement was made, however, a fair breeze sprang up, and on the 25th we ran by Aboo Simbel, and slept only thirty miles below Wadi Halfeh. The next day the breeze continued, and we reached the term of our voyage.

How contradictory is human nature! We had tho-

roughly enjoyed ourselves. The troubles and difficulties of our early days on board the *Lotus* had been only sufficient to supply the resistance that seems necessary to all enjoyment, and to add enough of the sour to render the sweet more estimable. Since an example had been made of Achmet, our pleasure had been unchequered by a single squabble or disagreement. We had counted the miles before us, not as so many to be got through, but as opportunities to be made the most of; we had striven with and doubted the impossibility of sailing yet higher, say to Dongola, and yet we arrived at the southern end of our journey in as high spirits as if delighted to have done with it. We had made up our minds to regret, and we found ourselves glad.

CHAPTER XV.

WADI HALFEH TO PHILÆ.

WADI HALFEH is a very disappointing place. We had read of long rows of camels and asses, of crowds of Arabs and Barabras; we had even been told to expect large bazaars stuffed with every kind of Soudan produce, stretched on either side of the river, and affording a more perfect southern African picture than any we had yet seen. We found a sandy island and another strip of sand that was not an island. Moored to these were a dozen dahabeahs. One or two stray camels, half a dozen donkeys, prepared with saddles for hawagers, and a single heap of barley, were all that was visible of bazaars, beasts, or merchandise. So we moored on the sandy strip, a little apart from the not extensive crowd, got out our tent, and laid under it, ruminating on the many faults in books on Eastern travel. They are not to be avoided. One sees a bazaar crowded, perhaps, with men and things; it is held weekly or once a month, or possibly once a year. He inquires about it, and his dragoman, with Eastern desire to magnify and render the sights he shows important, says that it is permanent. Down goes the statement for the information and disappointment of his readers.

We were not long permitted to ruminate alone. There was no shade but under our tent, and sheep and turkeys

and chickens quickly crowded in. Then, a happy family, we watched the preparation of the *Lotus* for her downward voyage. The hold was unpacked, everything it contained landed, and a thorough sweeping, scrubbing, and washing of the whole ship was undertaken. This completed, the stores were re-embarked, but were packed in such a manner as left the whole centre of the hold free. Across this open space stretched benches, on which the rowers sat or walked at will. Most part of the descent, it should be premised, is made by rowing, for the wind seldom serves on the return down stream. The oars are worked in a manner no doubt approved by the ancient Egyptians, and it is one that recommends itself strongly to the lovers of gymnastics, as affording excellent exercise to every muscle of the body. A plank is placed with one end resting on a transverse bench, the other on the floor of the hold; up this inclined plane the rower walks before he makes his stroke; making it, he walks backwards down again; the bottom reached he falls backwards, on to the bench behind him; continuing his stroke he pulls the oar handle up to the level of his chin; next, he passes it with his arms over his head, and concludes by falling with it on the flat of his back, much as a man in Europe does when he "catches a crab;" then he recovers himself by a process only possible to Arab joints and muscles, and begins again as before. Such exercise being insufficient for his lungs, he performs it to a never-ending chant. As many physical actions as there are in the rowing, so many vocal

variations are there in the singing. We were fortunate in not having a professed leader. Most of the boats we passed were better provided, and the artist had his one song, which was over and over repeated. Our men took it in turns to lead, and in this manner, though our singing was less good, it was more varied. But the crew did not like it. The song is given with great pride as a boat sweeps in to any halting-place, occupied by other dahabeahs. The leader, with a falsetto that wanders freely into minor keys, is listened to critically by the boatmen he approaches, and his boat takes rank by the extent of his compass. We had no one fit to exhibit before a crowd, and made our entry silently.

But to return to our preparations. The hold repacked, the big yard of the trinkeet is taken down, and fastened horizontally to the two masts. So long is it that it extends from stem to stern, and in our case projected slightly beyond each. Fixed with a slight slope or incline, it barely leaves room on the poop deck for our heads, and at the bow for the cook's. As if to show how dry is the climate, the sail, rolled together, is placed at the angle formed by the main-mast and yard, and remains there uncovered. Then the small yard is transferred from the mizen to the mainmast, and rigged there to be used should the khamsin (or south wind) blow.

Finally ballast is taken in to sink her deeply in the water. Half a day suffices for these arrangements, and when completed, the boat is ready for her return voyage;

but she is so changed as to be hardly recognisable. In the place of the long and graceful dahabeah, with her tall yards and floating pennants, is seen a kind of lord mayor's barge less the gilding. The heavy spar stretched along her length, shortens, and seems to crush her, whilst the tiny ballakoon on the mainmast makes her look ridiculous. But all she loses in appearance, is gained in usefulness. By reefing her long yard, less hold is offered to the contrary winds, and a deep trim gives the favouring current more power over her.

The cataract above Wadi Halfeh is said to be well worth seeing, as is also a view southward, from a hilltop close by. But neither could be reached except on a donkey, and C. was too lazy, and I not able to undertake an expedition. So giving but a single day for the arrangement of our boat, we commenced on the 28th January, our return voyage. Having sailed up the Nile, we then sailed down again. But an American dahabeah was smarter than we were. Arriving the evening after us in the dark, it started down stream that night before we went to bed and we rather admired their promptness. The forty miles that separate Aboo Simbel from Wadi Halfeh, are perhaps less interesting than any other part of the river of equal length. The river itself forms some unusually long and fine reaches, but the banks are tame and unattractive. But for the honour of the thing, therefore, as the Irishman said in the sedan chair without a bottom, boats had better stop at Aboo Simbel.

Leaving Halfeh at 7 a.m., we reached Aboo Simbel at 9 p.m. Our day was doubly pleasant. Thoroughly enjoyable in itself, it was also a relief to our mind. We had been rather afraid of the monotony and tediousness of a continuous float down stream. We did not expect much from the men's rowing, and thought that progress limited to the carrying power of the current, would become aggravating by reason of its slowness. We had little cause for alarm. The men, though not often working in the severe manner already described, were nothing loath to sit on the benches and paddle. So between floating and paddling, the days were got over, and with each day, a good deal of ground; and when we found ourselves tired at evening, it was rather from extreme gratification than weariness. Nay more, pleasant as we had found sailing up the river, it was not long before we agreed that floating down was still more enjoyable. There is a certain amount of grind—a feeling of opposition to be overcome—which, continued for a thousand miles, slightly tires and wears the nerves. Going down, as in Nubia we generally went down, with no more wind than sufficient to blow out our pennant, is the very smoothness of progress. One floats, one paddles, one rows; and as the Arabs chant, one goes fast or slow; but song or no song, on goes the boat, ever without effort; and as the west wind breathes on one from the desert, pure as air only is that has not touched man, nor his house, nor his belongings, for thousands of miles, so

balmy is it and soft, so fresh and yet so warm, that coats are unbuttoned, shirts are opened, and one longs to be clad in the belt of leathern fringe worn by the Nubian maidens, that every pore of one's skin might freely breathe the delicious air.

We passed a day at Aboo Simbel. The ruins, as they are called, though the term is scarcely applicable to two temples hewn in the solid rock, and almost in a perfect state of repair, are the most interesting in Nubia. Of the gigantic figures (they are sixty-six feet high without the pedestal) which form the façades of the larger temple, one has been broken off, and the upper part of it has fallen, the better to amaze the visitor at the enormous size of its proportions. But the others are intact, and the features and lines of all are sharply cut, as if finished yesterday. Inside, the hieroglyphics with which the walls are covered might be read by those that run, provided they could understand them, so sharp are their lines and distinct their character. The colossal statues that take the place usually filled by columns, are scarcely injured, and in places the very paint remains on the stone. But are not all these wonders written in guide books, and is not the very temple's self familiar to visitors at the Crystal Palace?

Aboo Simbel is by far the hottest place I have ever been in. The rock in which the great temple is excavated faces east and south. It is set in a bed of yellow red sand, that stores up and gives out the rays of the sun, so that even at night the air coming from it is hot as the

blast of a furnace. Any one in need of a hot bath has but, at almost any hour, to scratch a hole and lie down in it; but if he does so in midday, let him not take off his clothes, lest his skin be singed; our crew even protected their horny hoofs with slippers. This sand has assisted in the marvellous preservation of the temples; drifting in with every breath that blows, it has concealed them for centuries, and we were indebted to the Empress of the French for our full view of them, as it was for her sake that they had been completely dug out and exposed to sight.

Two other dahabeahs lay at Aboo Simbel. The travellers in one were full of the crocodiles they had shot, but not bagged, at Wadi Halfeh. The owner of the other was engaged in a similar pursuit, to be attended with similar results, on the sandbank opposite to where we were lying. Looking across and down from the elevation on which the temples stand, we could see a white spot in the shimmering sandbank. This was the hat of the man who filled the hole dug to conceal him, and in which he was patiently waiting his game. Two or three times the report of a heavy rifle was echoed across to us, and I was sorry for the poor temsah, whose pleasure in the early season of spring was so often spoilt for nothing.

A crocodile is not easily obtained. Everybody shoots at him, everybody of course kills him, but nobody bags him. Once only did we hear of a miss. It was made when we were at Wadi Halfeh, by an English servant,

who, lying in waiting in his master's pit, perhaps took a nap. Temsah came out of the water rather suddenly; and as these huge beasts move with little or no noise, his head could have been touched by the muzzle of the expectant rifle before he was seen. Up jumped the man, and round went the crocodile, equally frightened; they ran different ways; and it was not till the water hid them from each other that the first was seen to return, pick up the rifle, and, with the bravery of a Briton, discharge it into the river. But this was *the* exception. As a rule, temsah is hit just in the vital spot, but something always happens. If on land, he is able, against all reason or sense of decency, to flounder into the water; if already there, he sinks, and inconsiderately dies at the bottom. We used to regret, therefore, the resultless persecution to which he is subjected. He does no harm, as far as we could hear, in this part of the river; and his presence is an attraction in itself, and a compensating set-off to the cockneyism of the telegraph wire.

In the night we got up to see the Southern Cross. We had read of it as a nightly object of interest, and had been led to hope that it would rise during reasonable hours. Strange to say, no one of our crew knew anything about it. Great as is a Mussulman's respect for El Shah (the moon), the stars apparently have no attraction for him whatever. So we took to waking at odd hours, determined, if possible, to look on the great constellation of the south. It is not always easy to wake on

the Nile; the long day spent in the open air predisposes to sleep. With open windows, the soothing freshness of the night sits firmly on the eyelids. But about 2 a.m., when sleeping at Aboo Simbel, I woke with the consciousness that something was to be done; and, looking out of the window at my side, there, a little above the horizon, shone * the stars whose position proclaimed their name, * *

The stars * appeared very large and bright, but yet were neither in brilliancy or magnitude equal to many others to be seen in this marvellously clear atmosphere. The appearance of the Southern Cross is, however, exceptionally striking; and when seen high in the heavens, the sight must be magnificent. On the other hand, the figure cut up here by our good old friend the Bear was rather ridiculous. Half round the corner, and standing on his head, the light that he gave lustreless and dim, it would have required other aid than his had we needed to know the road to home.

The last three or four days of January were, we thought, rather hot. The thermometer in the cabins, with all awnings closed, ranged during the whole day from 85° to 95°; the nights also were less fresh than they had been. But the thermometer is I repeat a bad measure of sensation, and heat in Egypt does not fatigue in the same degree as in England. We found ourselves chilly when Fahrenheit stood under 70°, and put on our usual autumn clothes. But flannel was seldom bearable. In

this respect, as in many others, it is good to adopt the habits of the natives of the country lived in. Welsh woollens should be laid aside, and many garments worn of Manchester cotton. In the beginning of our trip we were much struck by the softness of fibre and looseness of texture seen in the shirts and underclothes of our crew. We sent Abed to buy us some similar cotton at a native bazaar. He returned with several samples; and, to our surprise, they all bore the Manchester stamp. The calico made for Eastern markets is admirably suited to the heat of the climate. Less dressed and more open, it better absorbs perspiration, and admits air.

The Arabs heap on or take off an infinite number of cotton garments as they feel cold or hot. Coming on deck in a fresh morning, one sees a stout man at the helm; then, as the sun gets power, he diminishes every half hour in size, whilst the heap of what appear to be blue cotton bedgowns grows at his side. I found great comfort in a set of shirts made of this porous cotton, and in exchanging thick English clothes for a number of thin ones.

In coming down we were charmed with the beauty of the river from above Ibreem to Sabooa. The Nile here exhibits in a large measure the contrasts and richness of colour which form the chief charm of African scenery. The river bank of vivid green, fringed and sometimes broken by the yellow red sand of the desert; the dark mountains of granite, syenite, or sandstone, ris-

ing from out of this bright bed of sand; the palms of a glassy emerald hue, the castor oil plant of olive, the sky of wondrous hue; and the river, here reflecting the rays of the sun, like ripples of burnished steel, there giving back the orange sand or the cobalt sky,—present a picture that such a master as Turner would have longed to paint, and despaired to render.

In one place near Ibreem, soon after the date groves, for which it is famous, had been passed, we came upon a very arid scene, and were much struck by the similarity that exists between two such dissimilar things as the sand of the desert and the snow of the Alps. In shape, the hills we were looking upon much resembled the crest of an Alpine ridge, and the sand that lay amongst them, coating the peaks, and filling the hollows, was in position and lie marvellously like drift snow and glaciers. Precisely as a black rock rises in Switzerland from a snowy bed, crops out in Africa a granite boulder from a drift of sand. So too with the tracks. The effect of a footstep in the snow or sand is identical. As we looked at the trail left by a number of camels we saw passing over the shoulders of these hills, it required the sight of the animals and the colour of the sand to convince us that it was not on snow that the tracks were made.

The hills themselves are colourless where they are denuded of sand. The first time we saw them from a distance, we thought the shadow of some cloud rested on them; but we searched the clear sky in vain for a

speck as big as a man's hand. Even afterwards when we knew that they stood in the same bright sunlight that lit up the sand all around them, so great was the contrast between the sombre hue of the one and the brilliancy of the other, that it was easy to believe once more in the illusion.

Talking of the illusions of Egypt, we ought not to forget the mirage, nor the less common one of the church bells. The first we have seen several times from our boat's deck; the last we have heard more than once. It is said that the solitary traveller will often hear in the midst of the desert, when far away from man or beast, the distant ring of village bells. Thinking that they come from a passing caravan, he may be lured from his way to destruction, just as he may be tempted from his road by the mirage. We met more than one person who had heard them when making excursions from his dahabeah into the desert, and we heard them ourselves. But, alas for the mystery! I am sorry to say it was always in the neighbourhood of the telegraph wires, or within such a distance of a sakia as might permit the creaking of that greaseless instrument, still, in that clear atmosphere, to fall upon the ear. Just above Derr we came upon a city of these waterwheels. Numerous as they are everywhere above Philæ, Derr, the capital of Nubia, is also the capital of sakia. At nearly every 100 yards there is one of them; and where the bank is high, one above the other raises the same stream of

water. Innocent of grease, their noise to those close to them is distracting. When passed at the distance of midriver, as we passed them where they stood thickest, their groans and shrieks blended together, and sounded like the hum of a monstrous swarm of giant bees.

C. landed at Derr to see the metropolis. The houses are of mud, but well built in comparison with those of Egypt. Nearly every house stands under the shelter of a grove of tall palm-trees, and consists of one or two courtyards surrounded by a high mud wall. One or more corners are thatched with palm branches or straw, and form the sleeping rooms of the family. The walls are solidly made and nicely fashioned. The entrance door alone breaks their even surface, and over this is let in a plate, of coarse white delf, or of the willow pattern.

There is an old temple at Derr, and C. went to see it, but was almost immediately forced to leave it, and return straight on board, by the number of natives, who, reeking with castor oil, and screaming at the top of their voices, crowded upon her. This was the only instance where she met with any rudeness either in Nubia or Egypt. The people are almost everywhere civil and inoffensive, and they only vary in their manners in degree. The ill effect produced in Europe by tourists is no less observable in Nubia. The manners are best where travellers go least, and an "antica" demoralizes the neighbouring population. Derr, as a very general house of call, is remarkable for the incivility of its inhabitants.

The difference in the races of contiguous tribes has been before mentioned, and was again remarkable in this part of the river. One village would be inhabited by well-grown people, with large frames and joints; next them would come a race with small bones, and round Asiatic-looking limbs. Here Arabic, there what we took to be Barabra, was spoken, and a little further the enunciation was different from any I should think in the world. Every sentence was spoken fast, like an allegro phrase in recitative, till the utterer came to the last three syllables, which were sung in a quick ascending scale that ended in a high C sharp. The effect of an ordinary conversation was infinitely absurd. Fancy a market woman singing out, "Please, sir, will you buy any e-e-eggs?"

The roundness of the Asiatic limbs just mentioned was so great that C. was unable to put on the women's bracelets. Several pair were brought to us at one village, of unusually pretty pattern. Broad silver bands, relieved by cable work, and having a depressed square channel in the centre, in which stood up solid knobs. We wanted to buy them, but they were so perfectly round that they could not be clasped on an European wrist.

Leaving Sabooa on the 1st of February, we encountered for the first time on our descent a strong north wind. So rough was the Nile that after trying for half an hour to float down, C. began to experience the horrors of seasickness. Fortunately the bank was near, and we

brought up in time to save her from the penalties of the situation. But we had fallen among a noisy, dirty, and obtrusive people, and to escape them, when emboldened by luncheon, we put out again to sea. The wind, however, was so strong and the water so rough, that after making two miles in as many hours, we were driven once more to shore. Short as was the distance, our object was attained, and the rest of the day was spent in the neighbourhood of an inoffensive village.

The next day the breeze continued, but with some moderation, and by landing in the middle of the day at Dakkeh, when the wind was at the highest, we were enabled to float a distance of twenty-five miles. During our halt a great number of people surrounded the boat, and several cases of sickness were brought to us for treatment. Ibrahim in vain stated that I was no hakim. To these Nubians, every white man is a physician, and in comparison with their utter ignorance, most Europeans have sufficient knowledge to justify the belief. The people were scrofulous, and two or three poor fellows exposing fearfully sore legs, begged to have them cured. The condition of the sores, covered with filth and flies, was pitiable. We had no means to help them. All I could do was to enjoin cleanliness; and as far as possible to ensure this, we gave them a supply of old linen, and went through a hocus pocus which seemed much to impress them. For each patient a clean white bottle was brought to me on the bank; with a pair of scales, a

quarter of an ounce of prepared chalk was carefully weighed out before them, and put into the bottle, which was filled with water. The legs were then washed. Half a dozen drops of the chalk lotion was dropped on to a previously wetted compress, and the legs were bandaged. The lotion was stated to be exceedingly strong, and a change of linen, previously soaked in the river, was ordered three times a day.

No one should go to the Nile without adding to his store some few simple medicines for distribution among the natives. We were frequently applied to for castor oil; a great deal is grown in Nubia, but it is not nevertheless plentiful, or even to be had, away from the villages where it is actually planted. Zinc lotion and nitrate of silver for the eyes were in much request; if the latter be too strong to be used by inexperienced hands, zinc can do no harm, and may often render service. But the Arab prefers something that hurts. Radouan, whose eyes occasionally suffered from the dust, thought little of a weak zinc lotion that did him much good, but begged for some nitrate of silver, and held back his head with apparent pleasure that I might torture him. He was made happy by the smarting produced by a few drops of eau de Cologne and water, that I passed off as the wished-for remedy. Compound rhubarb pills are useful, and tea is a greatly prized medicine. Every one who had caught cold begged for a few spoonfuls of tea. Laudanum, too, we found serviceable.

During the last fortnight the corn had been ripening fast, and fields that were green as we passed up, had turned golden under the hot January sun. On February 3rd we saw the harvest commencing, and a mile or two below the place where the crops were being cut, we came upon barley standing in "stook." In this district the land is thin, a considerable amount of sand being mixed with the alluvial deposit, and we were told that no second crop succeeds the barley; but in many parts of Upper Egypt three crops are annually taken from the same plot of land.

On the 5th, the breeze had blown itself out, and we reached Kalabsheh. We stopped to see the temple. The ruins are very extensive. The temple itself is of vast size, square and massive. The blocks of stone of which a great part is built are so immense, and so perfect, even in their ruin, that one wonders what force it was that has moved them from the positions in which they originally were laid. Huge blocks, perfect in shape, lie irregularly heaped on the top of walls perhaps thirty feet high, that stand upright and solid, unscathed by the hand of time. The edges are sharp, the corners unbroken; nothing from underneath has, as far as can be seen, given way. There is no crumbling, no decay. They show that once they were fitted together; now they are displaced, resting obliquely on or across each other; but excepting the change of position, the masonry is in every respect intact. Their whole appearance might be aptly

represented by a boy's box of bricks. Having built a high square wall, the top rows of bricks should be thrown in disorder, some suffered to fall, others to remain standing on their sides, or their ends, or obliquely resting on each other. Then a few spadefuls of dry sand should be scattered in and around the enclosure, and a fairly correct idea would be given of the state of Kalabsheh. Whence came the force sufficient to move such masses? why was it employed, and how employed without leaving a trace behind?

This problem seemed to us when gazing at the temple quite as difficult of solution and as interesting, as the one more often discussed as to the means used originally to move such weights. After passing some time in Nubia or Upper Egypt, one wonders not that things endure, but that they ever decay. With us there are at all seasons of the year a thousand *memento mori*. Dry sticks, dead leaves and grass, decaying trees, moss and mould, fungus and rottenness, all tell a tale of life that was, and death that approaches or is. In these dry hot lands everything seems hoary with age, dry and sapless, but unchanged, unchanging, and unchangeable. With us decay is always present, with a promise of new fresh vigorous life; in Egypt life seems worn out,—vitality not extinct, but standing ever still.

The natives of Kalabsheh were as ruffianly as those at Derr, and the arch-ruffian of them all seemed to be a man who spoke English with scarcely any foreign accent.

A fair was improvised for our benefit; the bank near us was in half an hour after our arrival covered with men and women, who offered spears, baskets, henna, and knives for sale. The noise was deafening, the sight disagreeable, and the smell of castor oil scarcely bearable. Our men took a good many baskets made of palm fibre on board, and much henna. This last was sold in leaves torn in very small pieces, and green, but dry. Every man took a supply for his wife or lady-love, and not a few tried the effect of the decoration on themselves. Before going to sleep for the night, the hands are filled with the wetted leaves, closed upon it, and tied up, so that they may not be opened till morning, when the patient wakes rejoicing to find his hands very like those of an orang outan,—dark outside, red within.

We were in such a hurry to leave the noisy, visitor-to-ruins-be-spoilt people behind, that we got under weigh before the breeze began to fail, and so brought on ourselves the first discussion with our crew, that had occurred since Achmet's dismissal. Floating down stream against a strong wind is necessarily slow. The rate of progress depends on the respective strength of the opposing wind and water. The mode of progress is to place the boat broadside to the stream, so as to expose her as much as may be to the weight of the current. In this position she has also as a rule her broadside exposed to the wind, and her mast, rigging, and house, acting as sails, give her considerable way. Under

the impetus thus obtained, she runs across backwards and forwards tacking from bank to bank, constantly carried by the current to windward, that is down stream. As a rule, a mile an hour may be nearly always made on the Nile in this manner; but where, as occasionally occurs, the stream is weak, the boat is brought to a standstill.

Such a dead stretch of water is met with at the head of the Kalabsheh gorge. It was but a very short reach, and after drifting about in it for some time to no purpose, I ordered the men to go to their oars. Now it is not the custom to row against the wind. With a calm or a favourable breeze the men row and paddle; when a contrary wind springs up, the oars are dropped, the men heap on piles of clothes, the boat is turned adrift, as just described, and wind and wave are left to fight it out. When I ordered the oars to be worked this custom was explained—"But we stand still!" Then, according to the reis, custom prescribed a halt. To fall again into the hands of the begging, noisy natives, was not to be borne; our order was repeated, and obeyed.

But Dahab felt himself ill-used. We were more than twenty days' out from Philæ; every additional day was another half tarali to him, and he was outraged at our flying in the teeth of the wind. Radouan, who shared the helm with him, shared also his feelings. One good trait in the Arab character is their readiness to help each other. They divide with their comrades their tobacco, their coffee, their every little comfort, and they naturally combine to

outwit the stranger. Whilst our men, therefore, assisted by the reis, laboured their hardest at the oars, Radouan and Dahab kept the boat wherever the stream was weakest and the wind most strong. Thus all our efforts were neutralised. I pointed out that we were taking a bad course, and Dahab naturally declared that it was the only possible one, on account of the rocks. Radouan then suggested that we should give in; this I refused, and the men strained away again to no purpose. Then the wind began to increase, and it was more than the crew could do to keep the boat from drifting up stream. This, and the knowledge that he was working hard for nothing was too much for the reis. Out of temper and out of breath with his exertions, he burst upon the scheming pair with true Arab impetuosity. Throwing down his oar, he rushed on to the upper deck, he pointed to the water, the wind, the working crew, his own perspiration, and denounced the conduct of the steersmen. Then seizing the tiller he brought the boat's head to the wind, sent Radouan to the oar, and in a few minutes we were forced through the slack water that had detained us.

We did not, however, go far. The wind kept freshening, and when we reached the foot of the gorge, it was blowing with such force through the narrow exit to the open reach beyond, that we brought up for the night. By the time we had done so, the passion of the reis was spent, and his conscience reproached him for having taken our side against his lieutenants. So he came to us, and with

amazing effrontery said, "There; the master wished us to row, and we have rowed; but he sees now that Dahab was right, and that the boat could not go on against the wind," and much more of the same kind; whilst the rocks were almost still ringing with the echo of the strong Arabic he had been using.

The next morning the breeze was up betimes. At 6 I saw through my window the catspaws already coming up the neck of the gorge, and I knew that an hour's delay would fix us in the place we occupied till dark. Once through this gorge,—it was not a quarter of a mile in length—the rocks fell back on either side, the long reach described on our ascent would be entered upon; here we should find the wind comparatively weak and the current strong. So I ordered an immediate start.

But Dahab knew all this too; a little delay was half a tarali to him, and of course there was not a little. I had to get up after half an hour was wasted, and set the men to work at their oars; but all this took time, and the breeze kept freshening quickly. It was a hard struggle to get to the mouth, and just as we had reached it, a heavier gust falling upon us drove the dahabeah backwards up the stream.

The men behaved admirably: all feared that we might be driven against the rocks, and getting out with speed the tow-rope, it was run forward in the felucca, and fastened to a rock ahead. We then warped up to this rock, sent the rope ahead again, and thus in a short time hauled ourselves through and out of the mouth of the

pass. Once through, and in safety, we moored the boat to the land, and held a court for reward and punishment. Dahab and Radouan were had up and told that they had both forfeited all claims to backshish, and the men received half a sheep, which the day before had luckily been killed.

We were not a little pleased to see that we had obtained complete mastery over our crew. No stronger proof could have been given. Our orders had been sufficient, after a momentary protest, to induce them to break through a custom of the river, when so doing entailed hard labour on themselves, and was contrary to the interests of one of their fellows. But the confidence we acquired by this evidence of our power betrayed us. We instantly began to sap it by the present of mutton as a reward; later on we forgave Dahab, and the Achmet lesson was forgotten.

It is difficult to sail on the Nile without a dragoman and not to come into collision with one's people. At first we were surprised that we did so, but we soon saw that it was inevitable. Our objects and theirs were constantly opposed. They desired to go from Alexandria to Wadi Halfeh, and back with the least possible labour; we, to make the voyage in the manner most agreeable to ourselves. They liked to sail up night and day if the wind was favourable; and to float down without regard to hours, if wind there was none. But going up or down, if the wind was contrary, they delighted in fixing the boat

to the bank, and in sleep, coffee, tobacco, and talk. We, on the other hand, insisted on a daily change, and a nightly rest. The practice of the river,—a law prescribed by the men acquainted with the river, and the result of incessant scheming against the employers ignorant of it and their language—a law made by the men as a protection against the dragomans and their masters—was, of course, in their favour and against us. At first we did not understand them nor they us. We meant to have our own way, but to be good natured, and please them; and we nearly succeeded in making a mutiny. They thought that every act of kindness was one of weakness; that every gift was a bribe offered to induce them to do something that was indeed their duty, but the performance of which we had no power to enforce. It was to their credit that as soon as they were mastered they became constantly willing, good tempered, and obedient. The men took to the oars when custom prescribed their abandonment, and the reis, to please us, strict Mussulman as he was, killed the flies with the flyflap as he drove them from our deck. It was our fault, rather than theirs, that though warned by experience we again relapsed into good nature, and suffered our influence to be weakened.

After an hour or two's rest, we started again. The wind had got up with the sun, as is usual in this climate, but we tacked across the broad river, and made fourteen miles before nightfall. On the morrow, the 7th of February, we anchored once more at Philæ. Our second

view of the long Tafa reach confirmed our first impressions, and we really could not decide whether the scenery of these fifteen or sixteen miles was more beautiful as seen going up or in coming down. Nor did we change our opinion of Philæ on returning to it; like most much-vaunted beauties, it has been overpraised. Philæ's fame should rest upon its ruins. They are wonderful; but the surroundings, the setting of the picture, suggests a wish to escape from it, more than it excites admiration.

The hills, not very high, and not very close, seem to hem one in. The river is less the Nile than at any part of it we have seen. Split up into several channels, the two which isolate Philæ, and are alone visible in approaching it, are small, sluggish, and so shut in that the island seems to stand in a pond. There are trees and sand and corn crops; but somehow the position in which they stand is not happy; the ingredients are there, but they are badly handled; and there is consequently, a want of charm. The picture, in short, is muddled; there is neither harmony nor contrast. Lastly, the ruins themselves are not well seen except when amongst them. The longest river face is a plain unornamented wall. The principal columns and sculptures surround or look upon halls and courtyards. The towers are fine; but the pyramidal form of architecture, as shown in Egyptian towers and Pylônê can scarcely be called beautiful. The building named Pharaoh's Bed, a square with columns resting on massive masonry, is a fine object from the river, and has nothing

resembling it that we saw in Egypt. But looked at from without, Philæ was to us a disappointment.

From and in the island itself, the scene is very different. Some part of the land, aided by the masses of rubbish with which it is covered, stands tolerably high, and from it a view is obtained of the surrounding country. The hills composed of granite rocks, heaped together in most fantastic shapes, the river winding amongst them, and the ruins themselves, unite to form a most singular sight. The temples and buildings are wonderful in their construction and design. Two thousand years ago they, no doubt, merited the epithet of beautiful, which, they are said to have deservedly obtained. Now we thought it scarcely appropriate.

It is evident that colour was no lightly esteemed accessory to Egyptian architecture; and the appearance of Philæ must have been very different when the reds and yellows, the artistic blues and greens, that the Egyptian painters delighted to place side by side, were fresh and new. Bright they still are in places, preserved to us by the whitewash and mud of the early Christians, the lazy means resorted to by these estimable people to hide from sight whatever offended against the taste of their superstition. It is a pity that they did not all lack energy; but unfortunately, muscular Christians existed then as now, and nearly all the figures and sculptures of Philæ are hacked and broken by hammers and chisels. Nor is this the only damage they have done. Except where the

temples stand, and where a few palms grow, almost the whole surface of the island is covered with the debris of the sun burnt bricks of which their houses were constructed. One great court, which was enclosed by the Egyptians with a kind of cloister of remarkably handsome columns, is filled many feet deep with Christian rubbish, and the grand pagan walls and roofs are partly concealed by the remains of Christian ugliness.

But if the merit of great beauty may be denied to the buildings of Philæ by men not bitten with the mania of archæology, the highest praise must be given by every one to the Egyptian builders. One leaves such a temple as may here be seen with a feeling that its architects aimed at immortality; and that in their climate, with earthquakes unknown, and gunpowder not invented, they ought to have succeeded. The character of the stone, the exquisite finish of the fashion and fitting of every block, the massiveness of every detail, and the closeness with which the gigantic columns support each other, made us wonder here, as at Kalabsheh, how ruin or even disturbance could ever have affected such a structure. It was easy to see where damage had been wilfully committed; and the amount achieved was so small, as only to point out more strongly the enormous strength of the resisting mass.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DESCENT OF THE CATARACT.

EITHER we were unlucky in our weather at Philæ, or a gale of wind is the property of the place. Coming up, a furious khamsin made our life miserable; descending, we suffered from a raging norther. Every dahabeah stops at one of the two landing-places possessed by the island. At these there is no lack of dust, and this dust is mixed with straw, feathers, fleas, and all the other abominations that boats collect and periodically cast ashore. To make the sum of our discomforts complete, we were by day constantly visited by the sheiks of E' Shellal, and at night musquitoes attacked us. Except at Philæ we had not heard the hum of one of these pests, since leaving some place below Thebes. Every dahabeah is, or should be, provided with musquito nets; but it is a bore to sleep in armour, and besides, however good may be the harness, such active foes, thirsting for blood, not unfrequently find entrance at a joint or a flaw.

On the evening of the 9th, we dropped down to the village at the head of the cataract, and the next morning were up at break of day to be ready for the descent. Calm is essential for the attempt, and at sunrise in these latitudes, there is rarely any wind. The Arabs began to appear with the first rays of the sun, and about seven we

were off. The preparations that had been made were simple and business-like. They consisted mainly in putting everything that could be damaged out of reach of water, and in clearing the hold and decks of all encumbrance, so as to leave full room for working the ship. The great yard was also dropped down to the level of the deck, and all top hamper stowed below in the cabin. Nor was the boat crowded with idlers as on the ascent. Two Arabs were placed at each oar, two more at the helm, and these, with the reis of the Shellal who took command of us, and one or two of his aids, formed our whole complement.

The graceful *Stella*, and another large dahabeah, started with us. The descent is not made by the channel traversed in going up. We knew this, but we expected a somewhat similar fall, and El Bab had not greatly awed us. Remembering, too, the fatigue of our scramble over the rocks, we shut our ears to everybody's remonstrances, our eyes to the example set us by the owners of the *Stella*, and stuck to our ship. Finding us obstinate, a place was prepared for us with our servants and reis, in the centre of the upper deck.

The fall makes, during its course, a slight curve, and runs between huge walls of rock. On the approach to it, nothing is therefore seen except the two rocks that in reality form its sides, but which overlapping each other appear to be one. The noise, however, as we came near warned us that it was no El Bab that we had to encounter.

All three boats were close together; the *Stella* leading, and we next. As we came up, and began to open the channel through the rocks, we saw the *Stella* on the brink of the fall, and her owners safely looking on from above. In a moment she glided round the corner, and as her hull rapidly sunk and turned out of sight, we saw her masts pitching heavily, and swaying not a little from side to side. Then as we came on, we saw her three-quarters of the way down, and making tolerably fair weather of it. In another instant, we were poised on the glassy waves at the top, in the act of making our first plunge, and the position was sufficiently critical to prevent any of our attention wandering elsewhere.

This gate of the cataract is no fall, but a rapid or shoot of very formidable character. Hearts of brass and triple oak must they indeed have had who first attempted it. Seen as it was by us only in passing through, it is most difficult to estimate the dimensions. But I guessed the length from the break at the top to a wall of rock that crosses it at the bottom, to be from 120 to 150 yards, and the breadth for the most part to be less than twenty yards. Either side of the shoot is shut in by a wall of solid but not smooth rock, and the uneven nature of the sides seemed constantly to throw the water with frightful impetuosity towards the centre. At every few yards, from one side or the other, sprang diagonally a huge wave, and as these side waves met, they formed a series of still larger ones, which went in deep and heavy ridges

bounding towards the bottom. At the foot of the rapid, as seen from above and when in it, is a high wall of rock against which it seems inevitable that the vessel must be dashed; but the line of waves that marks the torrent bed, turns short of it, and at an abrupt angle from it. The rock, impassable in front, is broken away to the right, and the rapid, falling back from the barrier it cannot overcome, rushes in a heavy surge through the way it has won. At the same time that it is thus drawn to one side, the wave repelled from the rocks and rebounding from it, seems to stand higher than the current line, and to act as a buffer to the rock. Of the height of the rapid I can hazard no guess; but it unites in the one shoot the height of all the different falls passed in the ascent. Once at its foot, there is a strong stream to Assouan, but no fall.

I confess that as I looked down on the rapids from the deck of our dahabeah, now in its mouth, I was completely surprised, and not a little aghast. The chattering men were one and all impressed to silence. C., with woman's quicker wit, had preceded me, and already arrived at alarm. In a moment more, the leap was taken, and our boat was rapidly running along the centre ridge of water. The men strained with their utmost force at the oars. Every one else except the reis in command and the two others at the helm, crouched to the deck. A few seconds, and the vessel began to bound under us in a manner I hope never to feel repeated. Each wave as it struck

under the stern, drove her already too depressed head still deeper into the water below. In the waves came, leaping into the bow, and up they went over the rowers, rendering their oars useless, and threatening to drive the boat bodily under. Such work could not last long; and as we neared the bottom, and should have made the turn to the right, the largest wave of all hurled us forward so straight, that we left the ridge and made full at the rock. Before we could touch it, another wave struck sideways on the stern of the boat, and washing up over the deck of the cabin, turned us short round. For a moment, our side was within a foot of the rock, then the eddy, passing us along it into a kind of basin formed under it to the left of the rapids, drifted us round till we lay with our head up stream. A yell of delight broke out from every-one. Ibrahim put aside his prayers till he should find himself in another scrape; and the turban of our reis was snatched from his head, in token of triumph, and as a means of obtaining backshish. Without a ransom he would assuredly not get it again.

But our attention was instantly diverted from ourselves. Looking up the roaring passage now directly fronting us that we had just come down, we saw the third dahabeah entering it. Down she came as we had come, and I was very glad that we had not seen ourselves so well as we saw her. Our own descent had been so exciting, that there was scarce room for fear until it was over; but looking on at the peril of another,

made me very much afraid for her, for what she was doing, and for what we had done. As she got into the worst part of it, she seemed to be standing up on end. Her bow was lost in the waves and spray, and I remembered a picture of my youth, called "Foundering at Sea," in which a vessel was represented going down head foremost. Up to the poop deck, she had already disappeared, and this part, crowded with terrified people, stood perpendicularly on the side of a mountain of water. But on this occasion there was no cause for fear. The dahabeah did far better than we did; holding her course with the rapid, she turned to the right, and passed by out of the passage before us.

In the meantime, our whole crew had been baling, and when sufficient water had been thrown out to enable us to proceed, took to the oars and rowed rapidly to Assouan. Arrived there, we had coffee made as soon as possible, the quicker to get free of our supernumeraries. Ibrahim would give them no sugar. "Sugar!" he answered to my remonstrance, "if I give them sugar, they will stay all the day." So we broke up a loaf on deck, divided it, then chaunted "all all gone," as a nurse does to her children, and sent them away happy.

Dahab was the last to take leave of us. He was a handsome fellow, most picturesquely dressed, in white cotton robes, a yellow and red silk embroidered waistcoat, high breasted and many buttoned, a red silk sash round

his waist, and a spotless turban. His teeth were Arab, that is beautiful, his eyes large, dark, and soft, and his eyelashes say an inch and a half long. Is it, by the bye, as a protection from the sand that nature has given to the Arabs of the desert the longest and thickest eyelashes in the world? Dahab's manners were as gentle as his voice was low and sweet, and we had long forgotten his wish to delay us at Kalabsheh, so we gave him the backshish we had promised, and something over. He was delighted, profuse in his thanks, and, perhaps, astonished at the sum he received, for he asked for nothing more. In half an hour, however, the Nubian was himself again, and he came back with a request for powder. Sent away with a few charges, he shortly returned and begged for shot. Going away with this, he soon reappeared, and said that he was ill, would we give him medicine? "What was the matter?" "Oh! his stomach did so," and he made griping actions with his hands. "What had he eaten?" "The *mangeria* in the kitchen." The man had nothing the matter with him, and his tongue was as clean as a baby's; but I gave him a couple of podophyline pills, with a devout wish that they would play him their not unusual trick, and give him all the sensations his hands had so graphically described. He went, and in a few minutes returned to ask for castor-oil. As this would have certainly been poured on to his wife's head, I refused; and, seeing that no more was to be got, he went away.

After such a morning as we had gone through, it took

a little time for reason to overcome the joint effects of our excitement and the fear which succeeded it. When we had eaten our luncheon and calmed down, we tried to estimate the real amount of the risk we had incurred. There had been two sources of danger. It was possible to be swamped by the waves, or smashed against the rocks. As so often happens, the peril which was the most threatening was the least real. It was the wave, the surge, the broken boiling water of the rapid that alarmed us. It is by the rocks that mischief is often occasioned. It can rarely happen that a boat is swamped. It not very unfrequently does happen that one is broken to pieces. We were told that two boats had been so lost in the preceding year, and when at Alexandria, a month later, we heard of the loss, that had taken place since our descent, of a fine dahabeah we had passed near Korosco. Still the quantity of water we took in showed that a small boat does not descend the cataract in the year of a high inundation without some risk. In addition to the quantity thrown out at the foot of the rapid, our whole crew were occupied baling for an hour and a half at Assouan; and as bucket after bucket went over the side, we felt that our dislike to the fall was not entirely without reason.

A wise man before he maketh a journey counteth the cost thereof. Weaker men must content themselves with doing the same after the journey is over. It may be convenient that I should do so at this the conclusion of

our Nubian trip, and so endeavour to determine whether it is worth while to go above the first cataract at all. For it must be remembered that this excursion is by no means a necessary part of a Nile voyage.

In money, the ordinary price paid to the sheiks of the cataract by a party with a dragoman is from £20 to £30; we, with extra backshish, paid £10. But the cost in annoyance is far heavier. For a day at least previous to the ascent, for two days during it, for the day of the descent, and one previous to it, our boat was taken possession of, and during more or less hours we were victims to the curiosity and cupidity of the Shellal sheiks and their attendant savages. The men did not behave absolutely ill, but it is no small discomfort to have one's boat filled by twenty or thirty Nubians, uncivilised and noisy, screaming, talking, smoking, spitting, crowding the decks, and always asking for more. Your bargain is struck, your money is paid, but foolish indeed are you if you think you have done with it. The backshish was included; the amount, indeed, was a subject of separate discussion, and a distinct article of the treaty; but backshish is an elastic demand. The more that is given, the more is asked for, and the payment of one sum is but a justification of the request for another. Our last resource was, on both occasions, to enter our cabin and shut the door.

Much of this annoyance is no doubt escaped by the traveller with a dragoman. It is customary, and most

wise, in the original agreement, to throw on the dragoman all backshish and every extra payment of every kind whatever, this including, of course, the cost of the cataract's ascent, guides to the tombs or temples, and donkeys to reach them. It is then the dragoman who has the discussion with the sheiks, and bears the brunt of their demands; and if the traveller resolutely sticks to his bargain with his servant, and refuses to have anything whatever to do with the sheiks, and equally to give anything to anybody, he will not be much importuned. Still more, if he be strong and able-bodied, he can get away from his boat when he finds the presence of the Nubians disagreeable, and pass his time pleasantly, free from the crowd. We were prisoners, and the people took advantage of the position. But we were not the only sufferers on board the *Lotus*. The poor old reis, between his fear at the cataract, and the teasing he endured from the Nubians, fell sick. He lost his appetite, suffered an attack of nervous depression, and for two or three days could say nothing but "*E' shellal moosh tyeb*" (literally, the cataract is not good).

The total cost, then, of an ascent of the cataract, is a little money, a little risk, not necessarily to oneself, but to one's boat-home, and more or less personal annoyance. The other side of the account is not so easily summed up.

Climate, to sick men, is the matter of first importance. Nubia, as compared with Upper Egypt, is hotter, pleasanter, but not more healthy. The appetite is less good,

and the mind and body are less disposed to exertion; but the climate is enjoyable beyond description. For purity, lightness, and warmth, the air is matchless. Clothes seem an encumbrance, and one longs for a constant air bath. Curiously, and, perhaps, fortunately for us, the khamsin did not blow once during the month we spent above Philæ. When it does so, Nubia becomes intolerably hot. From the smaller plagues usually found in a hot climate, it is comparatively free. Musquitoes, except at Philæ, we never saw; bugs do not exist, and fleas are scarce, still they are large, veritable lobsters, and in agility or appetite they equal the celebrated *pulce di Rimini*. The black fly is the single insect nuisance to be dreaded, and from them we rarely suffered. But then we took against this universal household nuisance most severely repressive measures. Morning and evening the flyflap was worked, and every fly that it was possible to reach was remorselessly killed. This may have been cruel, but it was essential for comfort, nay, for health. Flies get so much more to eat on board a dahabeah than on shore that they will not leave it.

The boat, as it passes along the banks, constantly attracts and rarely parts with them. The number on board consequently would increase and increase until one's life became a burden; and the repose necessary for health in a hot climate would be exchanged for an ineffectual defence of one's face and hands. We found, whenever our habitual massacres were neglected, that

the number of flies next day was doubled. It was then necessary to have a general chase. The men, armed with palm branches, were stationed along the decks; Ibrahim went to work in the cabins; one by one they were cleared out, windows and doors being closed to prevent readmission; and the flies that escaped were, as well as those that lived on deck, either killed or driven to shore. By such means only was peace procurable.

Apropos of flies, mention should be made of a spider whose species, common in Egypt, I have very rarely seen in Europe. This insect, somewhat larger in size than the ordinary English house-spider, has a big black mouth, and the head is furnished with four strong holding claws. It stalks its prey; slowly and cleverly advancing towards it until within four or six inches, when it springs upon it as a cat on a mouse. The fly, once seized, has no chance of escape. I have seen a small spider carried up by the one he had caught, retain his hold, fall with it to the ground, and kill and eat it. The voracity of the animal, too, was surprising. Lying constantly on deck, I knew one or two of the largest by sight, and have seen them, ten minutes after a successful hunt, begin another.

Of the scenery so much has been already said that it is scarcely excusable to revert to it. Where it differs from that of Egypt, it differs to my taste for the better. The two great beauties of Nile scenery are the Nile itself and the colouring. In both these elements Nubia excels. The short bends of Egypt can no more compare with

the noble reaches of Nubia, than can the colour and light of the northern country with that of the southern. The sand, for instance, of the one is to the other as the auburn-gold hair of an English girl to the flaxen hue of the German. Then the sunsets! but of these enough has been already said.

In two respects, however, the comparison now attempted is against Nubia. There is in it an absence of life. Boats are scarce, and an occasional vulture or a solitary hawk were poor substitutes for the abundance of birds seen lower down the river. We gladly welcomed the wagtails and swallows, the plovers and storks, the ducks and geese, the sandpipers of many kinds, and hawks of all sorts, as well as the fleets of native boats, when we got amongst them again. Then the Egyptian is quiet, modest, and well-mannered, as compared with the Nubian; he is peculiarly sweet, and the other reeks of castor oil.

CHAPTER XVII.

ASSOUAN TO THEBES.

On the 11th February we left Assouan. Crossing over from the island of Elephantine, against the bank of which we had been moored, C. went ashore at the town, and returned with a basket of pottery. Our crew laid in a stock of pipe-bowls. The pottery of Assouan is much esteemed; the shapes are those of ancient Egypt, and the clay is brought from the desert close by.

We had scarcely left the town when the north wind came up rude and strong, and we made fast about a mile below. Opposite to us, at a couple of hundred yards inland, was a fine sycamore, inhabited by a dervish. He ascended by means of a kind of chicken ladder, and had, as we were told, already roosted in the tree for some years. C. climbed a high sand hill to look at the prospect, and gave her escort, the donkeyless Ibrahim, hard work to keep up with her. I remained on board to talk with the reis and the crew. "*Moosh tyeb E' Shellal,*" began the reis, between the puffs of his pipe. "*Moosh tyeb,*" chorused we all, and then each man described his sensations. These people have what we should call "no shame;" if they are afraid, they say so. As they often are afraid, there is nothing startling to each other about the confession. Surely in this respect they are wiser than

we are. Fear is a question of nerves, and a man has no reason to be ashamed because nature has made him weak. It is a matter for shame if, fear-ruled, he does what he would not have done but for the fear; but to feel fear is beyond his control, and seems to me to be no disgrace.

Indeed, one might go further, and assert without paradox, that the man who feels the most fear may be the most brave. Henri Quatre, for instance, when he apostrophised his trembling knees, and made them carry him into the thick of the fight, was braver far than the Bayard *sans peur* had ever been. Our Arabs were, however, no Bayards. They each told how much they had been afraid, and Girghis spoke for all when he declared his fixed determination never to be frightened by the same cause again.

During the next day or two the north wind continued strongly blowing. On the 12th we made a few miles, but on the 13th, actually hoisted the ballakoon, and retraced our steps to find shelter. One afternoon was spent fishing, or rather watching a native boat so doing. A large seine was several times drawn by eight or ten men, and a considerable number of fish were taken. There were seven or eight different kinds. One huge fellow must have weighed at least 40 lb., and two others that we bought—all three being of distinct species—weighed 10 lb. and 12 lb. respectively. The 10 lb. one was armed with sharp and opaque white teeth, shaped like the teeth of a large saw, but rather farther apart. They were

uncovered by lips, and exactly resembled the filed teeth of a fighting Ashantee. He was not very good to eat, the flesh being rather sweet; but two fresh-water herrings that we also took, were excellent. In structure they were precisely, and in appearance wonderfully, like their North Sea cousins; and with a little imagination, some mustard, and a strong flavour of gridiron, we were able to declare that they reminded us of Loch Fyne. The other species of fish were, with the exception of one that had something of the appearance of a grey mullet, unlike any we had ever seen; and we determinedly resisted Girghis's wish that we should eat one that looked as if he had left his skin in the Nile, so transparent and raw-looking was his body.

On the next day we landed, and passed a most peaceful charming time under some palms. The particular tree that shaded us was a happy family. The parent inside towered far above; round her were grouped 19 full-grown children, lusty and strong, whilst at her feet sprung up others of different ages, down to the baby, big as a full-grown cabbage. Round the group were hung, on a rope of palm fibre, bits of stone and brick. This was done by the owner of the tree, to attract the attention of any one who came by, so that their first observation might be, "What are these bricks for?" and not "What a beautiful tree is this!" That so the envy of no evil spirit might be excited, and the tree might ever flourish. We were told that each stem, in a fair year,

would yield about 35 francs worth of dates—a tree well worth protecting; and, in addition, it gave annually a large quantity of fibre, for the manufacture of nets, cordage, mats, and baskets.

What a narrow strip often represents the living part of Egypt. Here even I could walk across it. A single row of palms alone separated the Nile from the desert; and the outer members of these family trees stood in the sand itself.

We stopped at Kôm Ombos that C. might go over the ruins. Except to an archæologist they are best seen at a distance. But near or far, in them or from the river at their foot, the portico is a fine object. The temple was built in the Ptolemaic period; and here, as in the tombs of the kings at Thebes, are marked on some of the architraves of the portico, the squares used by the Egyptian artists when delineating the human figure. These drawings never having been finished, the squares are still visible. To amuse me, a wild-goose chase was undertaken by Radouan, with the usual results. The sandbank opposite the temple was covered by flocks of geese and ducks, all far too clever for us.

On the 15th the north wind had blown itself out. With more or less violence it had raged for fourteen consecutive days; and as we paddled down to the inspiriting chorus, of "Kooloo sowá" (all together), we one and all gladly welcomed the change. The crocodiles, too, seemed to enjoy the calm as much as we did. On

one strip of sand above Silsilis we saw five huge fellows basking in the hot sun. As we came up to within gunshot they slid quietly into the water, and we brought up, that we might land and look at their footprints. As little noise as possible was made; and every now and then a huge black snout, like a log of bogoak, protruded from the river; or a boil under water was seen, bigger tenfold than the break made by the largest salmon that ever turned at a fly. The wind that had blown over the sand had left a clean page on which temsah's writing was clearly traced. Between the marks of the feet lay the track of the trailing body. One trail measured no less than 25½ inches in breadth. Widely outside this were the footprints on either side. The whole body of the animal would certainly not have touched the ground, and the diameter of this brute's chest must have exceeded the measure we took by at least some inches.

Sleeping at Hagar Silsilis, the grottoes were visited the next morning. The quarries are also well worth looking at, as their size gives some idea of the wondrous building feats of the men of old. Later in the day we paddled in a most luxurious calm down to Etfoo. We stopped to see the temple. It is immense in size, wonderful in its preservation; and the finish of the sculptures, paintings, and hieroglyphics, is most minute and beautiful. It stands about thirty feet below the present level of the surrounding town; so much depth of sand having, wind borne, accumulated round it. The entrance to the

interior is therefore over some thirty feet of wall; from the top of it a long flight of steps made in the excavated side leads to the floor. The whole of this grand building is now dug out, and gives, perhaps, a better idea of Egyptian temples in the several respects of strength, distribution or plan, and decoration, than is afforded by any other single edifice. There is also a smaller temple at Etfoo; but it is less interesting and more damaged, many stones having been quarried from it for modern purposes.

The calm continued, to our great contentment; and the next morning we met a fleet of country boats, each towed up stream by a motley crowd of poorly-dressed and poorly-looking men and boys. We had fallen in with the advanced portion of one of the pasha's forced labour levies. Poor fellows! Unpaid and unfed, each man had to give his labour and feed himself for such time as the work should be unfinished. Should they fall faint or hungry by the way, should they fall sick or die on the works, it was their own look-out. A paternal government took them in its wisdom for the country's good. As long as their strength could render service, it would be used; when it failed, others would be found to fill their place; and their bones would work in with the sand and soil that formed the earthworks on which their life was spent. Thus was it on the Mahmoudieh canal, where the bones of 20,000 men lay stored.

It was the custom of the country, and our reis and

crew seemed to see little hardship in it. On the present occasion there was less than usual. The work in question was a truly public one—planned for the supply of water to the land of the villages from whence the levy was drawn. If the sheiks to whom the duty of selection is entrusted performed their office with fairness, the tax, though falling with severity on some individuals, would produce a result highly advantageous to the community. Fagging at schools is looked upon by the upper boys with much equanimity. In the same manner was forced labour regarded by our people, exempt from the levy; but to lookers on, to those whom education and civilization have taught to value life and liberty, the spectacle of some thousands of boys and men taken by force from a class docile and oppressed, industrious and ground to the very earth by exaction, was as sad a one as could well be presented.

The whole of that day and the next we continued to pass boats on the river, and bands of the fellaheen on the bank; and on the third day after we had seen the first of them, we fell in with the main body of the levy. And very pretty as well as sad was the sight. A rather fitful north breeze was blowing, sufficient at times to drive the boats quickly up against the stream; at others, rendering the tow-rope necessary. Thus most of the boats, in order to be equal to either occasion, had half their living freight on shore, who, now pulling at the rope, crept along to the time of some never-ending vil-

lage song, or now, as the breeze freshened, ran shrieking and howling to catch up their boat, and at all times stole and ate everything, not only edible but green, within their reach. Each team had its driver, and each driver had his stick. With one hand he beat the boys for stealing, with the other he stole dandelion, the Arab salad.

We had now been long enough in Egypt to have greatly lost our horror of the stick. In the first place it is necessary. Then the people don't seem to mind it; and lastly there seemed to be a natural fitness of things in the absence of covering, in the case of the majority of these people, from the part that is usually selected for its application. The impartiality, too, with which it was used could not but be admired. The driver might make mistakes if he exercised any choice among the backs; but he didn't; he simply hit the one that was nearest. So beating and beaten, howling and singing, stealing and eating, the poor fellows walked or ran along the bank till the breeze steadied and freshened, when a general rush was made for the boats. The naked part of the crowd plunged without concern into the river. With their greens in their mouths or on their heads, they swam with alternate strokes of their arms, and the body half-chest high out of water, after the Arab fashion. The others, encumbered by the riches of their clothes, followed along the bank, hoping for a chance to get dry on board. The river was alive with boats, the banks with men.

We counted in one reach that was certainly not more than three miles long, ninety-nine boats. In one of the largest of these boats we also counted 100 men. There were not many of this size, but none held less than from twenty-five to forty.

All that day we continued at intervals to pass flotillas of six and eight boats, or of three and four; and the next night and day scattered ones continually came up. Many men also made the journey on foot. During a couple of hours that I lay under the trees lower down at Bajoor some hundreds passed by. There was almost as much variation in race observable amongst them as in Nubia; and a group of tall and lithe-limbed men would tread on the heels of another composed of eminently repulsive looking objects with distorted faces and stunted forms. The levy must have counted its numbers by thousands; and it was discouraging to think of the mass of misery entailed by such a displacement of poor humanity; of the certain hardship and probable disease consequent on bringing together so many boys and men, poor and ignorant, dirty and in want.

On the 19th February we reached Esné. The next day was devoted to bread-baking. Bread is the staple of the Egyptian sailor's food. Indeed, with the green food of different sorts picked from the crops on the bank, with sugarcane when it is plentiful, eggs when they are cheap, onions, and lentil soup, it forms his whole bill of fare. Except, of course, on those high feasts when the

hawager provides them with mutton, or one of their number returns from a night passed at home, with his hands full of chickens. They are good to each other, readily sharing all they have; and no man returns from his home without a contribution to the general pot.

Frugal, however, as is their fare in quality, in quantity it is most prodigal. They eat all day. Between our breakfast and dinner they find appetite for three regular meals, each divided by a snack; and the length, or solidity of the snack is only limited by the goodies to be eaten. The bread is made by the men themselves, and baked at a public oven. All the large towns are provided with such an oven for the boatmen's need. They buy their own grain, see it ground, and throwing from it only the coarsest part of the bran, make the rest into loaves of the size of a twopenny roll. The rolls, when baked, are brought on board, and each one is cut into three slices. It then lies on the deck for, from four to six days, exposed to the sun and wind by day, covered by the sail cloth at night. Under this treatment, the slices become hard as sunburnt bricks, and would keep almost as long. The bread, most excellent fresh, is good even after a month's keeping, provided it has been dried in favourable weather, and very rarely is the wherewithal to dry it lacking. It is generally eaten with lentil soup; broken to pieces into a wooden bowl, the boiling potage is poured over it. The men sit round. Reis Ibrahim and Reis Radouan ate with a spoon of horn,

the men with horny fingers. When, for want of something better to eat or to do, it is used at odd times, it is dipped in the Nile, and so made masticable. Grain is cheap in the country, and the cost of bread to our seven men was about two francs per diem.

At Esné we heard of a great misfortune that had happened to our reis. During our absence in Nubia, two thieves had broken into his house at Erment, and stolen all that he and his wife and his son possessed. The rascals had at night cut their way so noiselessly through the housewall of sunburnt brick, that the reis's wife had slept during the burglary, and woke the next morning to find her house empty. She lodged a complaint with the sheik of the village, who immediately seized upon the two biggest scoundrels within his jurisdiction, and proposed to punish them at once, on the principle of *se non è vero è ben trovato*. Nor was he altogether wrong. On searching their houses, a chest was found which the old woman identified. The men swore it was theirs. She produced the key; whereupon the wife of one of them, with woman's desire for the last word, tore her hair, beat her breast, and called down maledictions on the infamous person who had placed it in her house for the destruction of her wrongfully suspected one. The sheik, however, deaf to her pleading drew up a conviction, and placed his firman to it. The thieves thus convicted, were men of substance, so that nothing could seem simpler than the affair. On the one

hand the reis would get his goods, or his goods' worth; on the other, they would get the stick. But law is complicated all over the world; and in this case there was a double complication.

In the first place, the reis's wife, at the time of lodging her complaint, had estimated the value of the stolen goods at twenty-four napoleons. The reis wishing to improve the occasion set them at thirty-five. On the other side, the thieves were convicted, they had feet to be beaten and money to pay; but one of them was a kawass of the effendi of the district; and it was the effendi's province to award the payment, and to fix the number of the stripes.

To watch the case we went to Erment, where the big man lived. The reis, yesterday overflowing with tears, to-day full of wrath and just indignation, demanded in his ignorance of the relations existing between effendi and culprit, retribution and restitution. The effendi smiled; "the man was a kawass—his kawass: what did the reis mean? Go to, let him be content with two-thirds of the money, and no beating. How could the kawass attend the effendi if his feet were sore?" All that day "bazaar" was made between the complainant and the judge. We lay opposite the court, and I passed the time in receiving reports of the cause, and in inquiries as to the judicial system of the country. How came it, that a man notorious for his ill-deeds, was retained as a kawass? Ibrahim explained, that morality

was no part of a kawass's duty, "*basta forte*. The effendi sends him to bring a man, and he brings him." Desiring to help the reis, whom we thought ill-used, we offered to see the effendi and state that unless he did justice we would return to Esné, and lodge a complaint with his superior, the pasha, for whom we had letters of introduction. Then it came out that the reis had already made this threat on my part, and further had declared the money, of which more than half the loss was composed, to be mine, consigned to his keeping for payment of the crew's wages. Would I state that this was so in court? I explained that it was not an English habit to lie either in court or out of it, and the statement made me appear to be so dangerous an ally, that the reis declined our help with thanks.

Erment at this season of the year was not a pleasant stopping place. The river bank, lined with large sugar factories, swarms with flies, which, attracted by the sweet sap of the bruised and broken canes, wax fat and unctuous on so rich a diet. Emboldened by high living, we found them peculiarly aggressive; and no undefended inch of hand or face was free from their cold touch. The air too was heavy with the vapour of brown sugar, and we were therefore delighted to receive through Mahomed, a message from the reis, asking us to leave him at Erment, and wait for him at Luxor, twenty miles below. So getting under weigh, we floated down to that town.

The next morning C. started at sunrise to go on a donkey to the tombs of the kings. At midday the reis came on board, hot and weary. Piteously pointing to his feet, he reproached me for leaving him behind, and forcing him, old, sorrowful, and robbed, to make so long a walk in the heat. I called up Mahomed, and it came out that the reis had sent no message whatever by his brother-in-law, but that this amiable connection wishing with the rest of the crew to enjoy the society of Luxor, had imagined one.

The old man's condition proved how real had been the fatigue he had undergone, and it is mentioned as being the only thing beyond a doubt in the various accounts of the affair he gave. One sometimes regretted that there was no truth in Egypt—an absurd regret, for Egypt with truth, would no more be Egypt, than Egypt be Egypt without the Nile. Reis Ibrahim was charming, his manners perfect; his care of us was great, and his desire to please unbounded, but he was Egyptian, and it was impossible to believe a word that fell from his mouth. At Erment he told us that the effendi offered him two-thirds the amount of his loss. At Luxor, the next day, he stated that he was only to get half that amount when the harvest came round, and he borrowed four napoleons from me for his destitute wife. So many and so contradictory were the stories he told, that I began to doubt whether he had ever been robbed at all, and to think it possible that the

whole affair was got up with a design against our sympathetic purse.

Left to myself, I laid on the bank under an awning, and watched the manners of the natives. Underneath me was a small branch or creek of the Nile, which reenters the main river at Luxor. In this backwater the *Lotus* lay fastened to the bank, and above and below her were half a dozen other dahabeahs, and perhaps twice as many native boats. The last, with aged timbers, torn sails, and destitute of paint; the dahabeahs gay with the flags of all nations, bright with paint of various hues, their long pennants floating out in the breeze, or lazily flapping the water. Opposite was a cerulean blue; close on our right a ginger brown; we, lotus like, wore white and green, with just a line of pink; one was clad in green; and another had broken out in lobster red. But painted however they may be, dahabeahs, with their holiday-keeping and bent-on-pleasure look, beflagged, bestreamered, and much awninged, are pleasant to the eye.

So too, was Luxor, with its temples, consuls' flags, and the palms, on this side visible. Opposite to me, at only a few yards' distance, was the watering-place, the common resort of all the town. Oldfashioned is the Egyptian's idea of water. With him, the Nile is everywhere the Nile. The Nile supplies the sweetest of water; and from whatever part of the river the water is taken, is it not the Nile water, and therefore sweet and good, nay,

sweeter than any? This watering-place was being used for every conceivable purpose, including many Eastern customs that it would be difficult to describe in Western language. The men come down, squat on the brink, and wash in it. A beggar man sits down by it, with a lump of bread we had given him in one hand, some refuse green stuff he had picked up, as salad, in the other, and dipping and rinsing this frugal fare, he eats. Pausing for a moment in his meal, he wipes his mouth with his hand, and continuing the downward action, fills the palm and drinks. Just below, the cook of a dahabeah is killing chickens over the gunwale, and plucking a turkey. Groups of women, side by side, wash their clothes, and fill their water jars. Those blows that one hears, that sound like a stick weightily laid on the ribs of a donkey, or the beating of carpets in England, are the thuds of their feet, as with a hop and a jump they bring first the left and then the right heavily on the clothes heap laid at the water's edge.

Nothing changes in Egypt: these women have the very features and shape depicted on the sculptures. There are the beautiful rounded arms, the small wrists and hands, the tapered fingers, the filbert nails. There, too, are the magnificent busts and the well-shaped legs; and there, too, are not that roundness of shape and swell of form that Leech has claimed for his English models, as with a sweep of his pencil, he made them almost impossibly beautiful. Amongst them, however, is a Nubian girl of very

different proportions; and here come three buffaloes, driven down to drink, and take their daily bath. They stretch themselves in the river, with nose and face alone above the surface, stirring up the mud, but in no degree altering the colour of the water; and there on the back of a cow the calf has rested its head, and lies tranquilly chewing the cud. Next, a string of donkeys delivers its load of a salt, called natron, that is found in the ruins close by; and three camels, roaring, biting, and struggling, are forced into the water, washed and scraped. In the midst of all, a dozen naked boys are splashing about, and the town water-carriers alternately fill themselves and their goatskins. All this and much besides is done; and it must be remembered, not in the stream of the Nile, but in the unchanging water of a small and shallow creek.

Constantly coming up to the same place, were native boats, of all forms and build. There is one towing up the river bank, full of brown-garmented fellaheen. As they come to the point where the creek re-enters the river, and cuts across their path, three or four, slipping out of their clothes, and into the water, wade through, and push their boat across. One's eye has become so accustomed to all shades of brown and black skin, that it scarce notes whether they are clothed or not.

Close behind them comes a boat that would be more round than long, if it were not more square than either. The timbers of the roughest logs are held together by

wooden pegs, whose heads, not driven home, project an inch or more from out of the sides. It is caulked with mud, and manned by three from eight to ten year old clotheless urchins. The protuberance of their stomachs is balanced behind, and their whole shape suggests the idea, that it can be but a few generations since their family went on all fours. Then passes another boat. The after-part is filled with the canopy and posts of an old English four-post bedstead; under this covering, the proprietor sits in state, solemn, sedate, and proud, in much clothing, and with an amber mouth-piece. Above his head, a negro boy squats on the canopy steering, and the sail, a sheet of holes and patches, is managed by a gaunt Arab, clad, in what seems to be the last sail worn out, when the present one was new. But the boats are endless in variety. One more, the most incongruous of all, and I have done. It holds an Arab boatman, a boy whose only covering is the scalplock on the top of his shaven crown, and a Jew, in red fez, black frock coat, white umbrella, and photographic apparatus. But the ferry boat *must* be added to the list. It is exactly the shape of a Turkish slipper, and is supposed by antiquaries, to have been the felucca of Noah's ark. More probably it was built about the same time as the temple of Karnak. Great as are the preservative powers of this climate, it is scarcely probable that any of the original timbers remain. No doubt as the ages wore on, a beam would occasionally decay, and be replaced; but there still re-

mains the boat, a wondrous specimen of joiner's power, and of wood mosaic. Into it goes a donkey, and another, and another. Does anybody know the use of a donkey's tail? An expert, say a costermonger, would answer "for a crupper." No such thing. From the beginning was Egypt and the Nile. The Nile never wanted a boat, nor Egypt an ass; and the tail was given to help the one into the other. See how quickly it is done! First his forelegs are lifted in, then a man from above in the boat, gives a single haul at the tail, and in goes the donkey like a shot.

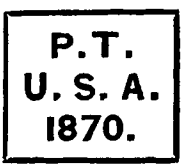
CHAPTER XVIII.

LUXOR TO GIRGEH.

C. PASSED a day in visiting the Tombs of the Kings, situated in the hills, lying at three or four miles inland from the west of the river, and two more on the "Wonders of Karnak." I am not about to attempt any description of tombs or temples that I did not see, except from a distance. It would require careful study of them, and much power of description, to do any justice to their proportions, or to the magnificence of their design and execution, and at the end the account would not be half as good as that given in Murray. As seen from the river, the mind probably only takes in a faint idea of their size and beauty; and yet one could not but be struck with astonishment at their extent, and wonder what manner of men were those who undertook such colossal works, and from whence were drawn the enormous resources necessary for their completion.

One matter, apart from the temples, though unfortunately connected with them, ought, however, to be noted; and there is the more pleasure in referring to it, that doing so may assist a gentleman in his apparently strong desire to be famous. On all the temples we have seen, at Philæ, Aboo Simbel, Derr, Korosco, Etfoo, Esné, Medinet Haboo, the Memnonium, and Karnak, some per-

son had, on this year, painted in black letters, of a massiveness and size proportioned to the Egyptian architecture, the initials



Occasionally an immense "America" has been added to the above, for the information of those for whom the letters "U.S.A." and the "bigness" of the writing were an insufficient indication of the nationality of the writer. Pencils, pens, and penknives, even chisels, have been freely resorted to, and record on the Egyptian monuments the bad taste of men of many nations; but it was left to one of the go-ahead continent to carry about a big brush and a black can, and to blot out the hieroglyphics by the square foot. At Karnak alone seven of the most conspicuous places attest his wish for notoriety, and I should be glad to aid him to the extent of my small power in the object he had so much at heart. It may be hoped that his example will not be largely followed, as the guides were indignant beyond measure at the modern blots made on their ancient show.

On the afternoon of the 25th February we got under weigh. I was loath to drift by Karnak without having seen it, but unable to do so, we floated on regretting and dreaming. Before long we ran on a sandbank, and all

thought of the singular fate which had condemned me to pass days at Cairo and Luxor without visiting Karnak or the Pyramids was dispelled. A dahabeah is deeper in the water forward than aft. This form of the hull prevents the boat running too far up a shoal, and makes it easier to push her off when aground. When such a mischance occurs on going up stream, current and crew unite to push her back the way she came, and she is generally afloat again in a very few minutes. But in going down, the detention caused by the accident may be much longer; as the boat takes the ground with her bow, the weight of the stream acts on the stern, turns her round till she comes broadside on to the shoal, and heaves her up sideways on to it. The sensation of this crab-like motion as she scrapes along, and of the rush of water on her in this position, is disagreeable. In a minute, however, the men are at work; it is an occasion when a push in time may save them nine. One by one their clothes are thrown off, and they go popping into the water. We drew about two and a half feet, the larger boats are perhaps six inches to a foot deeper. The men stand, therefore, in a depth not too great for the exercise of their strength. Placing their backs against and under her side, they heave and strain until they get her round with her head up-stream; she is then made to retrace her steps. The Arab does nothing without noise, and each heave is accompanied by an invocation to Saïd, or a prayer to Allah. On the present occasion, the *Lotus*

drifted hard and fast upon the bank, and it took us an hour to get her off. We had, therefore, ample time to admire an echo, which sent back every cry. There was no mountain, not a hillock, nor a rock within reach, so that the echo had the bank and the bank only for its seat and habitation; but the response, nevertheless, came back with wonderful distinctness.

There had been a great change in this part of the river since we had passed up. As we came to Negadeh we found ourselves unable to approach a bank that we had previously marked out on account of its good looks for a halting-place, and at Ballas we found a rock standing five feet above the water, that on our ascent had been entirely under it. Such a fall makes no small alteration in the appearance of the river and country. We all know how a standpoint of a few feet higher or lower alters whatever may be seen from it; but in Egypt the change is far greater. We came upon flats by the banks and others lying as islands in the river, now green with corn, from two to eight inches high, which we had passed under water, or possibly floated over. More often sandbanks had been laid bare; and once we saw, for the first time on the Nile, a bed of shingle. The land immediately adjoining the river is, of course, wherever the banks are perpendicular, less seen than ever, and the fault already noticed of the saucer-like appearance of the Egyptian landscape is so far increased. But, on the other hand, as the course pursued lies generally in the centre of the river bed,

rather than close to one or other bank, a more extended view of at least one side, and a better general view of both is obtained. The views, too, of the desert are far the more lovely in the descent. The main reasons for this superiority are perhaps to be found in the greater contrast afforded by the forwarder condition of the crops and in the light.

In going south the sun must be more or less in one's eyes. The shady side of the mountains is, therefore, generally seen, and, hill or flat, the landscape loses in colour from being looked at against the light. In returning northward the sun is at the back, and everything has all the advantages that light and shade in this brilliant atmosphere can give. The mountains, too, whether on this account, or because we saw them before when fresh from the Tyrolean Alps, and now compared them with the Nubian hills, looked twice as big.

We stopped at Negadeh, though not at the place we had chosen. The town, a very old and curious one, is situated in one of the most lovely spots on the Nile. It has a large population of Copts and pigeons. Every house is equally divided between the two occupants. The Copt family has the ground floor, the pigeons the upper story. This last, the better cared for of the two, is ornamented with whitewash, decorated with red bricks, castellated at the top, pierced with many loopholes at the sides, and has further, for the convenience of the birds, two or three rows of thick peasticks, which project perhaps three feet

from the walls, and at right angles from them. The whole building is a square tower, and resembles an old-fashioned East Indian native fort. The birds are rock pigeons and common property; most if not all of them share their time between the town and some mountains a few miles inland. Within a certain distance of the houses no one is permitted to disturb them. The Copts vie with each other in seeking to promote their comfort, and so to attract the greater number, each to his own dovecot. The young, as soon as eatable, are taken from the nests inside, and so the price of the forbearance shown to the parent birds is exacted.

There was a market held at Negadeh, and amongst other things we bought for eight piastres, a bundle of sugar-canes, as a small backshish for the crew. The bundle contained 21 canes, each six to seven feet in length, and about an inch and a half in diameter. Thus each man had some 18 feet of cane to pass through his teeth. The mode of work is simple. A cane is cut into seven or eight inch lengths, split into two or three pieces, and chewed. Nearly the whole bundle was got through in the afternoon, and the remnants were finished by breakfast the next day. The quantity of juice contained in a cane is great. The taste is that of brown sugar and water, and the residuum is "chips."

As we dropped down to Ballas, it looked so lovely that we landed, and I laid under a huge tree that the boatmen and natives called "gemerser"—I give the phonetic

spelling; the right name we did not know. The bark was smooth, the leaf small, the foliage non-deciduous and dense. It bore a fruit like a fig in shape, which, at this season unripe, and, as we were told, less than half-grown, was of the size of a pigeon's egg. Cut open, it smelt like a slice of fresh cocoa-nut.

There are at Ballas more than the usual rather scanty variety of trees. In gardens close by, enclosed by mud walls, grew oranges and lemons; and, in addition to the ordinary date and dôm palms, there were nabuks, sonts a species of mimosa, and the tamarisks of the Brighton squares grown into giants. The fruit of the nabuk, at this season ripe, resembles a Siberian crab, but is smaller in size, and better to eat. We rather wanted to sleep at Ballas, the place was so charming, but Keneh was within reach; and, as usual, our children of boatmen strove hard for the coffee-shops. It was their delight to stop for the night at some place distant five or six miles from any large town. This done, they calculated that, with our habit of starting late, we should not probably reach the town until too late for the cook to go marketing before our mid-day meal. Then, with the delays which accompany every purchase, with the time consumed in seeking for the mutton chops, and the cabbages that were always promised and never obtained, the afternoon would slip by, and we should rest where we were for the night. To obtain this was their joy. Why indeed it was so constantly surprised us. Most of the crew never left the

ship; those that did go returned before sunset. The sum of their excess was a pipe and a talk with one or perhaps two other boatmen outside our cabin. Still pleasure there must have been, for at least half-a-dozen times during our journey, did they try every possible device to bring about a halt for the night at such a convenient distance from a large town as I have described.

On the present occasion, hurried from Ballas, we were kept going long after dark. One village was no village at all; another was far from the bank, or the position was exposed to the wind, and was dangerous on account of thieves; the ghost of a murdered boatman was even resuscitated; and Keneh represented as being four or five hours distant, instead of as many miles. The wind taking them at their word, made them speak the truth, for a strong north breeze opposing us next morning, every mile took its hour. Nor should we have reached Keneh at all had not the men, influenced no doubt by the desire to reach the coffee-shops, adopted our suggestion, contrary as it was to all Nile usage, and towed down stream. The town is a couple of miles by road from the halting place of dahabeahs. But the never-failing donkeys were in attendance, and after luncheon C. rode in with Ibrahim. The products of Keneh are sweet soft dates, brought from the Hegaz, and porous water jars. Excellent are they both of their kind; but C. was not at first lucky in her purchases. The dates, dark coloured throughout, had not the yellow bottoms most highly-prized, and the goolahs all had holes

where holes ought not to be. In short, the tricks of trade were not altogether unknown at Keneh, and we had bought leaky pottery and dates of an inferior quality.

In returning home, C. was joined by the reis, Girghis, and Mahomed, each jar-carrying and donkey-carried. Cantering in at the head of the string, she heard a sudden noise behind, and turned round to see a confused heap of men and asses, with their legs in the air. Ibrahim had fallen over a palm-tree trunk which lay in the track, and two or three of the others following close behind had rolled on the top of him. No damage was done except to the goolahs; and *their* pieces it was not possible to pick up.

Dendera lies on the opposite or western bank to Keneh, and a little below it. So we dropped down on the next morning, the 28th Feb., in quest of the temples and poultry for which it is famous. We saw neither. As to the chickens, the pasha had been before us, we were told, and pashas, like locusts, leave little behind them. We asked if the pasha paid for what he took. "No," said Ibrahim; "*il pasha è bujero*, and pays for nothing." Accustomed to Ibrahim's language, and gifted with happy thoughts, C. suggested that *bujero* might be an Arab rendering of the Italian *povero*. We were equally unlucky about the temples. The pasha had, it is true, not eaten them; but the day was intensely hot, C. was lazy, and the shade and coolness of the trees under which we pitched our tent were most inviting.

These days ashore were very pleasant to us; but there were banks and banks. Wherever dahabeahs resorted, fleas, flies, and filth abounded. Idlers, too, swarmed and buzzed about, each with a burnoose equalling in capability the all-productive handkerchief nightly borrowed by a Wizard of the North. Scarabœi and signet rings would come out of one corner, a treasure of ancient coin from another, a small god or two from a third, and perhaps part of a mummy from the middle.

The position we took up at Dendera was on a bank standing high above the Nile. We had the sun on our backs and the air in our faces. In front, on either hand, was a lovely view of the river. Behind us grew a wood of dôm palms, with a few date-trees interspersed among their less useful cousins. Under the trees was a large plain of vivid green corn, broken occasionally by thickets of mimosas. Through the stems of the palms, glimpses could be caught of the golden yellow mountains beyond. At our feet lay the *Lotus*. On her and over her hovered and perched two immense hawks, which stooped from time to time to pick up the scraps thrown overboard by the cook. The trees were full of birds. One, about the size and shape of a linnet, wore a coat of the colour and brilliancy of the green of an Indian beetle, and on his breast a waistcoat of burnished red brown. Another I recognised as an old friend, by the orange tuft on his head; and my fingers itched to tie his feathers once more into a salmon fly. He tempted us so

much that the gun was sent for; but he was too tame to be murdered, and we said, with Uncle Toby, "Poor devil! get thee gone; is not the world big enough for us both?"

The road ran by the spot where we idly sat; a road innocent of iron shoes and wheel tires, worn smooth by naked feet. First came the postman along it, going at a good swing trot, and holding a six-foot-long stick high in the air. A leathern bag, shaped like a portfolio, with the sides only sown up, hung over his shoulder, and explained why we had been told that the native post is not a too safe means of conveyance. These postmen are stationed in relays at the different villages on the route traversed, and are employed all along the banks of the Nile above Minieh, the present railway terminus, and letters are no doubt occasionally lost. But the greater proportion of the miscarriages occur through the fault of the writers, who, addressing their letters in the Latin character, send them fearlessly into a country where Arabic writing only is sometimes understood. C. was asked at the post-office at Keneh, to read the direction of a huge bundle of letters for the "*Cleopatra* dahabeah, by the care of Mustapha Aghar, of Luxor." This direction written in our character, was not legible to the Egyptian postmaster. At Sioot also, a dozen letters addressed in different languages, were put into her hand, and she was asked to redirect them. All letters for Upper Egypt should be sent through the consul's office at Alexandria, where the addresses can be turned into Arabic.

Next came a well-dressed Turk, riding a donkey, and followed by his pipecarrier, on another. He stopped a few yards before reaching us, dismounted, gave his donkey to his servant, and came up with a request for backshish. Not getting it, he made us a most gentlemanlike bow and rode off. Then a Coptic monk, speaking Italian, presented a French letter, and in writing, *viva voce*, and by action, preferred the same demand. He gone, it occurred to me that the chickens, some time turned loose, had also disappeared. The two men deputed to watch them had done so by going to sleep. The crew turned out, and vainly beat the corn. The Faithful had to be called away from the wash, and came up the bank steaming with heat and soapsuds, with his hands full of petticoats. Putting down the clothes, he climbed a dôm-tree close by. Encircling the trunk with his arms, he pressed his feet against it, and walked up the palm like a gorilla. Can these people of supple joints be of the same race as ourselves? What white man would sit by choice on his hams, or could walk up a tree, with his body in the shape of the curve in a capital D?

In the afternoon, the reis returned ill from Kench. He suffered great pain in the lower part of the back and bowels; his pulse was above 110; and he could scarcely walk. We feared at first that he had sustained some injury from his fall with the donkey the previous day. But our mind was made easy by finding out that after his dinner he had eaten, as an innocent pastime, a hatful

of hard-boiled eggs. Eggs were cheap at Keneh; ten were sold for the Egyptian penny. The reis had bought a pennyworth and eaten them.

Sleeping at Dendera, we dropped down to Wishna on the morrow. It was market day. On our up-journey, we had obtained at Wishna some excellent veal. Few people are more confirmed mutton eaters that we, and I had always thought veal a bad thing, and beef an unnecessary one. But if one lives every day upon mutton, and that mutton not English, a beefsteak comes to be thought of with longing, and a veal cutlet with appetite. So we resigned ourselves to an afternoon spent in baking heat for the sake of the supplies we wanted. But Wishna this time failed us, and our day at it narrowly escaped being one of misfortune.

I was lying on deck on an intensely hot morning, watching the fellaheen streaming into the town on foot and on donkeys. The pigeons, in large flocks, were bathing and drinking in the river. It is a pretty sight to see 100 or 200 of these birds flying like swallows over the surface of the water, and suddenly dropping into it and under it for a bath. But a hungry Arab has no taste, and Ibrahim begged for the gun that he might shoot a pie. I was weak enough to let him take it; still more weakly thinking that the injunctions given him to be careful would prevent an accident. He had not long to wait for a shot; the birds came off and out of the river, and dried themselves on the bank in scores. The

first time he missed, but his second shot was followed by horrid screams. They came from a boat less than eighty yards above us, but I could not get there, and the yell that succeeded yell of a boy in severe pain bitterly reproached me. After two or three minutes the screams subsided into sobs, and in two or three minutes more, Ibrahim came back with his ugly lips drawn apart with laughter, and all his sheep's teeth showing. "*Non paura, siynor; ma feesh male, basta paura.*" By which he meant to say that I need not be afraid; no harm was done; the boy was frightened, not hurt. I then learnt that a pellet of shot had grazed a boy's wrist, a second had penetrated his lip, and a third had scored his eyelid, without, however, injuring the eye. Thus, fortunately, we were all quit for the fear.

Soon after, Girghis returning without anything we wanted, we got under weigh. The weather was becoming too hot, and we determined to get 100 or 200 miles to the north whilst it was still bearable. Early as it was in the year, only March 2nd, the sun had such power as we were unaccustomed to, and did not find agreeable. For some days past, the thermometer during all the full of the day hours, say from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., was seldom below 90°; on this day it stood at 98° at 5 p.m. This reading was taken on the deck, open to the air, but well shaded. In the cabins the heat was much greater; but living on deck, and our registering thermometer having been broken, we could not measure the temperature.

As the day went on, the heat became as trying in kind as in degree. At sunset the appearance of the sky and of the horizon to the southward, was very peculiar, threatening us with a thunderstorm, and probably a gale from that direction. So I spoke to the reis and Radouan on the subject. The Arabs could not bear our habit of forecasting the weather. At first the reis used to act as if he was insulted when we asked him his opinion of what the morrow's wind would be. Then he told me it would be what Allah willed; and we understood that he thought it impious to attempt to read the signs of the heavens. We, therefore, explained our belief that it was by the will of Allah that coming storms and changes give, by signs in the sky, warning of their approach; that it was Allah, also, who had given us sense to understand these warnings; was it not good to use his gifts? On the same occasion we were able to point out a white woolpack that was hurrying up on the wings of a coming norther—a rarely-failing forerunner of a northerly breeze in Egypt. From that day he would often ask what we thought the weather was going to be, but he never ventured on a guess himself, nor would he willingly calculate when we should arrive at this or that place, such attempts to look forward being, as he said, most unlucky.

On this evening, however, the signs of the times could be overlooked by no one. The heat was intense; the atmosphere close; the southern horizon thick and lurid;

the sky in the same direction seemed wrapped in a veil of mist; and both the reis and Radouan, expressing much anxiety, told me that they expected a northerly gale, and would like to make fast and snug for the night. Knowing how utterly unobservant they both were, and consequently how unweatherwise, their opinion had no weight with us, and we determined to continue until a turn of the river was reached, where we should get shelter from any gale or storm that might fall on us from the south.

At sunset we were still in an exposed position, and could see a mile or two into the desert to the south and west. Stretching right across this part of the landscape was a line, that appeared to be a thick wall, perhaps 100 feet high. Above this, the sky was for a short time of a deep blood red, and then as the sun went down, an unusual darkness fell over us. Farshoot was close ahead, and we determined to get there; so at halfpast six we ate our dinner on deck in a sweltering heat and dead calm. The lantern glasses were, at this stage of our voyage, of course broken, and the lights were almost extinguished by myriads of midges, the only midges we ever saw in Egypt. At seven we reached Farshoot; and the darkness had become so heavy, that we ran down the whole line of a fleet of boats lying along the bank before we could find our way in and bring up. Just as we did so, a distant thunderstorm came within hearing, and the black pall to the south-west was lit up by constant flashes of lightning. A few heavy drops of rain, most unusual phenomenon in

these parts, also fell, and we went below giving many injunctions as to additional moorings. There was no need of such advice: the men, alarmed at the appearance of the weather, trebled our ordinary boat peg fastenings, and made everything on board as snug as possible. Hardly was this done when a heavy storm broke overhead. The lightning, very forked and bright, flashed constantly; the thunder burst out in never ceasing salvoes, and heavy rain came rattling down. In half an hour all was apparently over; but, to our discomfort, the darkness and stagnant heat continued, and a stillness that seemed oppressive if not menacing in its deadness fell upon us. However, there was nothing to be done, so we went to bed and slept heavily, panting outside the sheets under musquito nets.

Suddenly I was woke by the crashing outburst of a furious rushing wind. A hurricane had fallen on us, instantaneously, like a flash and peal of thunder from a clear sky. There was not even a shrub near us, but the sound was as the roar of a tremendous gale in a forest of trees. The voice of the wind itself was like the falling of trunks and breaking of branches. Our men's cries could scarcely be distinguished from the shriek of the gale. But what was that awful despairing yell close at our side, and then another and another? I looked through the cabin window at my bedside, and saw by the incessant flame of lightning, boat after boat of those that had been lying ahead of us come flying by. They

had been torn from their moorings by the fury of the blast, and as they passed close almost to touching of our side, the piteous screams of their helpless crews reached us even above the general roar and shriek of the storm. It was the most frightful sight and sound I ever heard or saw. The darkness was like black dead cloth. The lightning split its way through this dark pall, with jagged rents, in all directions. The water when lit up was white and churned, not in waves, but driven flat on the surface before the hurricane; and as a boat rushed by us I caught sight of a dozen terrorized men clinging to the rigging, and heard their panic-stricken scream given within a few feet of me.

Throwing on a few clothes, I went into the main cabin, and from thence, with the door slightly ajar (it was fastened at night with a cord like the chain of a London house-door), I looked out. The awning of the main or lower deck, under which the crew slept, had been torn down; but fortunately it had been driven against the cabin, and the men had nearly secured it. The ballakoon had been also blown on to the deck, and now lay helping, by the weight of its spar, to hold the awning beneath it. Our moorings held, and the anchor with a very heavy hawser was also ashore. We were safe if there was any virtue in hemp. Looking ahead, I saw in the glare of the incessant lightning a country boat in the act of parting. She seemed to start from the bank as if thrown from it by a catapult. In another moment she too had

rushed close by us, with her shrieking hapless crew, and was lost in the black night.

Then suddenly the heavens opened, and rain fell; and such rain! It was as if a cloud had burst, and the volume of its contents had fallen, unchecked by atmosphere, upon the earth. It began, not in drops, but as a sheet of water, torn and riven by the wind, but solid in itself. With a sudden splash it fell on our deck, struck against the cabin door, and entering at the part held open, wet me in an instant through and through. In three or four minutes the deluge ceased, almost as suddenly as it had begun, and the hurricane, beaten down by the weight of rain, was gone. The whole duration of the storm was not more than perhaps a quarter of an hour, but it was a quarter of an hour not to be forgotten. The feeling of our own utter helplessness, the horror of the people's screams—screams extorted by utter fear, together with the frightful storm, were enough to shake any nerves; but C. behaved well, as women nearly always do, and hurrying on some clothes, had put our watches and money in our pockets, and then waited with the air mattress in case we should be cast away and upset.

A dead calm succeeded, coming on us, if a calm could be said to come, almost as suddenly as the tempest's self; and with the reverberation of the thunder, the roar of the wind and rain yet in our ears, with eyes still aching from the lightning's vivid flash, we found ourselves again in pitch darkness and perfect silence. The quiet was so

unnatural, and the heat still so great, that we could not sleep. Every now and then a cry of some one in distress came up the river from some considerable distance, and it was almost a relief to the tension of one's nerves to hear this sign of life from the men we had seen cast away. Twice in the next three hours there was the sound of a heavy rush of wind overhead, and a few splashes of rain, threatened a return of the tempest. Then a small storm broke at a mile below us, but it was feeble after the one we had just seen, and about 4 a.m. I fell asleep.

On getting up next morning we found the weather very threatening, but it was cool. Storm clouds gathered on the mountains close below us, and every now and then flashed out thunder, lightning, and rain. Heavy squalls of wind occasionally swept the river, and passed on to leave a calm. About 9 we got under weigh, wishing to leave the neighbourhood of the mountains, and to see what had become of the boats swept from the bank on the previous night. Ten of the missing vessels were, we heard, completely lost. Our progress was not altogether pleasant, and twice in the first two miles we were forced to run ashore and anchor, till a squall had passed us. About half a mile below where we laid, we passed a boat on a sandbank, bottom uppermost. At the foot of the mountain another lay, broken in half; close by was a third, dismasted, her side hastily patched with new planks and cords to keep out the wash of the waves; and all day we continued to

come upon others, which had sustained more or less damage. For the lives of their crews our people had little fear. These Arabs swim with a vigour and strength unknown to us; and unless struck and disabled, they could scarcely be drowned in the Nile.

A short distance below the mountain's spur we heard a noise familiar enough, but almost impossible in Upper Egypt. At first we could not believe our ears, and thought we must be deceived; but no, as we got a little further on we saw a rapid torrent of bright red water bursting into the Nile. In other countries a tributary stream entering the parent river would excite no remark, but here it was a marvel. In all the 1000 miles we had traversed of the Nile, not one brook or rill of water enters it. At almost every mile, often at every 100 yards, means are used to draw the water from it, but not one drop is added to its volume. Thus the great river flows on and on, but contrary to wont, indeed unlike all others, gets ever smaller as it goes.

But the wonder that had just astounded us was instantly explained by yet another. A new face of the mountain was opening to our view, and from its arid cliffs were leaping many tiny rills. Unlike the cascades of the Alps, running through rounded rocks and a well-worn course, here each stream explored and won its way through unchanneled sand and roughly fissured stone.

Fortunately the afternoon was bright, and between the showers the men were able to dry their clothes and bedding.

They made, however, much less of their drenched state than we did. Like a parcel of schoolboys who had not seen rain for months, they dabbled and splashed in it, rather pleased than otherwise when it fell most heavily; and their childish pleasure grew into delight when some good sized hailstones fell upon the deck. Abed brought them to us as great curiosities, and Ibrahim, equal to the occasion, said, "*Sai io, è sale.*" Some part of the men's high spirits was, no doubt, an expression of joy at their escape. Experiences were compared. No one had seen such a storm before. One had seen as heavy rain, another wind nearly as strong, but not one had ever heard of such a combination of lightning, wind, and rain. The Shellal was bad, said Girghis, but the storm was worse.

At Ballianeh, where we stopped that night, much tidings of great mischief was heard. A man riding inland where water had never run before, had been caught and overwhelmed by a sudden torrent. Carried with his horse into the Nile, the two were drowned. The crops were beaten down, trees uprooted, and the harvest all destroyed. This was an exaggeration, but that the rain had been extraordinarily heavy, was abundantly proved. Short as had been the duration of the storm, the broad Nile itself had risen a whole hand's breadth, and its colour had changed from *café au lait*, to the deep golden yellow of the desert sand. The reis, hunting up his recollections, said that he had once, as a boy, seen the Nile of the same

colour at Cairo, and that he had once heard of a similar rainfall at Luxor. I thought of the watercourses south of Philæ, but though I made frequent inquiries, I could never hear of rain being seen to fall, or even reported to have fallen, higher than Assouan.

CHAPTER XIX.

GIRGEH TO SIOOT.

Sooner or later, in one form or another, payment for pleasure is in this world exacted. We had prepaid for a time, and now enjoyed the charming weather our storm had purchased. It might have been called cold, but the thermometer never fell below 73°, and the fresh north wind, as it forced us into our winter clothes, and delayed our progress, whetted our jaded appetites, and braced again our unstrung nerves. At midday of the 5th of March we reached Girgeh. We had been for a couple of hours within a mile of it, but the force of the breeze was such that it negatived the stream. With the coffee-shops so close ahead, the men were unwilling to stop short of them, and we thus had ample occasion to test the merits of a system we called the crab. This mode of travelling down-stream is resorted to when the wind is almost or quite dead ahead. The dahabeah is placed as nearly as may be broadside to the wind. The men sit at their oars with their faces toward the bow, and row the boat backwards with just sufficient force to prevent her forging ahead. Held thus in the strongest current, not permitted to gather way, the weight of the water has full play on her side. Against such a stream as that of the Nile no gale of wind could force a vessel broadside, and down she must

go. So down went we, and got at last to Girgeh. But "the crab" is very seldom used, depriving the men as it does of a recognised occasion for waste of time and idleness.

After marketing at Girgeh, the wind fell with the sun, and we started again. In the evening we got on a rock, and it was found the next morning, after leaving Ayserat, the place where we slept, that the boat had sprung a leak. There was a good deal of water in the hold, and we stopped for repairs, baking, and drying. At Wadi Halfeh and ever since, our people had been laying up stores of the country produce, until every corner of the vessel was filled with dates, henna, baskets, and other "notions," for sale at Alexandria or Cairo. These speculations, poor people! could not have been very successful. This was the third time the dates had been got out to dry, and the men were anything but muzzled during the drying.

Leak-stopping on the Nile is part of the steersman's work, and Radouan proved that he was as good a man in the water as out of it, so we were soon made watertight, and got off again. Shortly afterwards we were boarded by a sheik, a holy man from the neighbouring Moslem shrine. His boat was as great a curiosity as the ferry boat at Luxor. Almost the size and much the shape of a cockle shell, the after part was covered with an awning, made like the tilt of a gipsy's cart. Under this sat the sheik, rudder in hand. At his feet was a cat, tied by the

leg. Next the cat was his servant or slave, ready to light his pipe and row the boat. On the mast hung his flag; from the tiny yard waved a two-tailed pennant, home made and composed of palm fibre, a string of small pieces of tin, and a baby paper kite. The old man's manners were as full of ease as his clothes were of holes, and the freight of poverty and dignity carried by the boat was sufficient to have sunk it. A backshish of four piastres made glad the poor fellow's heart, but it also excited Ibrahim's astonishment to such a degree, that he could not refrain from saying, "*Perche il signor non da Cristiano.*" Why did I give to a sheik, and refuse a Coptic monk? We did not tell him, as we certainly thought, that a genuine Mussulman was likely to be as good a man as a nominal Christian, but we got him to understand that we gave to a poor and old man, even though he was a Mussulman, and refused a young and strong one, notwithstanding that he called himself Christian.

We were now approaching Eckmim. The fall that had occurred in the height of the river since our ascent had greatly affected the beauty of this part of the country. The banks, grown high, intercepted all view between themselves and the mountains, and we were inclined to hurry onwards to prettier scenery. But we moored for an hour or two at the town to enable the reis to pursue a debtor. Every dahabeah carries on board a stock excuse for stopping the boat, and this is produced whenever anybody wishes to see anybody else on shore, or when the

men generally desire a halt. On board one boat this year the crew were given to matrimony. Man after man asked leave in turn to go on shore for the night, that he might be married. When the cook's turn came his request was preferred, but a very favourable breeze happened to be blowing, and he was refused. Desirous that his marriage holiday should not be lost, he replied, "It doesn't signify; I think I can do it rather better a little further on." A less romantic pretext was shipped for our voyage. Almost every man on board had in turn asked us to put him ashore, and wait, that he might seek to receive a debt due to him. Needless to say he invariably returned empty-handed, and fixed the amount of his loss at the sum he thought most likely to move our sympathy and tempt open our pockets. But there are few fictions without some foundation in fact. This time there was a real debtor, and the reis, by virtue of a writ, took him prisoner, and brought him on board. The man had in some former year made one of the crew of our boat. As is customary, he had received on or about his enlistment a month's pay in advance, and, as is not very unusual, two or three days afterwards he had deserted. It was quite wrong to feel pity for such a rascal, and yet one could not but be sorry for him. Dishonesty had not thriven with him. Hollow-eyed and lantern-jawed, dirty and unhealthy, his scanty clothes in rags, he was the picture of misery and want. The wife who came down to intercede for him showed that she had borne the larger, the

woman's, part of the suffering consequent on his fault. How could money be wrung from such a pair?

In a few minutes the usual crowd of idlers and swaggerers, each with his pipe, had assembled on the shore before us. Between us and them stood the reis and his victims. He said, "Pay, or I take you to the effendi at Sohag." The man pointed to his torn clothes and his thin frame;—how could he pay? could blood come from a stone? The reis was unmoved—the money or the stick.

Then the wretched pair went the round of their friends and acquaintance on the bank. Most refused any assistance; some gave a few piastres, and all seemed highly to enjoy the scene. The man looked at the sparse pence, and submitting, told the reis, in seeming bitterness of spirit, that he was ready. Once more the wife interceded, pleading so eloquently, poor woman, in her despair, that the old man's kind heart gave way. Then Radouan stepped in, and turned the scale against mercy. Reproaching the reis and scolding the woman, he took the man by the shoulder, and pushed him on board. The word was given to shove off. On this the friends who had subscribed attacked those who had not, and amidst boisterous laughing, struggling, and mock fighting, a few more pence were collected. The handful of coppers was offered to the reis and refused. It was then suggested that we should pay the debt, but we had learnt not to be in a hurry. There would be plenty of time to save the poor wretch's feet from the stick, and we were

by no means yet certain of the amount of the debt due, or whether it was due at all.

So we pushed off with the man, and were followed down the bank by the crowd. Sum after sum was offered in redemption of the writ. At last the reis accepted some offer I did not understand, and getting into the felucca, he paddled off to surrender the debtor and receive his due. When he had got half-way to shore, a general cry was raised from the dahabeah. Our men were afraid that as soon as the reis landed the delinquent would escape, and he be beaten. The suggestion of this possibility brought the reis back to us, and I offered to allow the dahabeah to go to shore. This would have given trouble, and was refused. Then I said "Send some one with the reis." "Yes," said they all, and "No, not I," said each individual. The others then suggested that Mohammed, the old man's brother-in-law, should go, and the man refused. Then Abed went. The Arab character is not courageous, nor altogether nice. Kind to excess as the reis was to our crew, there was only one of them who would run any risk to save him from a beating. But risk there was none, and the party, less the debtor, soon returned with two pieces of silver added to the coppers.

We slept at Sohag, and started next morning before I was up. Waking, I heard a tap on the outside of my window. "What is it?" The language on board the *Lotus* was peculiar, and the answer given by our interpreter, Ibrahim, was, "*Girghis voglio stop.*" "*Perche?*"

Then spoke Girghis. "*Fee bazaar and ballat*" (there is a market at the town). "*Cè vitello?*" "*No, carne mia feesh, basta meat*" (no veal, only mutton). "What wind have we?" "*Howa faborabile,*" says Ibrahim. Coming up we had called the north wind favourable, and Ibrahim, who picked up words quickly, ever after called it "*howa faborabile.*"

The markets are most amusing: that of Sohag is well attended, the wind stopped all progress, and we went back. The town itself is squalid and unattractive, but the Nile was full of life. Crowds of native boats were hurrying up, down, and from across the river to the bank. The guardians (native police) made room for us, delighted to have occasion for using their six-foot-long sticks, and thus to assume the bullying airs of Eastern authority.

A native boat on a market day resembles the last-to-be-filled carpet-bag of a family luggage. The amount it holds is only equalled by the variety of the contents; however full it may be, there is always room for some one thing more. In such a boat are packed away men, women, and boys; donkeys, sheep, goats, and a camel; turkeys, chicken, and geese; cucumbers, onions, lettuce, and trusses of white clover. I had almost forgotten sugar-canes, butter and eggs, palm ropes, mats and netting, water-jars, fleas, and flies—for such things are there as a matter of course. The first thing generally seen getting out is the bare leg of an impatient lady. She soon follows, with two chickens under her arm, and a score

or so of eggs in the skirt of her clothing, which is too much occupied with its brittle charges to have due regard for any regular duty. Then out rush the crowd: a number of brown-coated fellaheen stagger away under their onions or clover, or half push, half carry their donkeys on shore. Turbans of all degrees of cleanliness follow; their wearers, too sedate to hurry, each with his long pipe, and many with a servant to carry it. Perhaps a greater man still, with red tarboosh, amber mouthpiece, three or four followers, and a donkey caparisoned with a red saddle, and even a bridle. Only the very distinguished "*brics*" are bridled. Small people content themselves with a cudgel, and direct their donkey by a blow on the cheek, or a kick with the foot. Last of all comes the camel, rolling, grunting, complaining, anything but the docile animal our early education, with its usual accuracy, described him to be.

Along the shore two lines of market-goers came respectively from the north and south. Men on donkeys and on camels; men, women, and boys on foot. Other lines of Arabs and beasts stretched from the bank to the town, laden with produce from the boats. These are occasions in which our men delight. They dress themselves in their best—that is put on all their clothes, one garment over the other; and however hot may be the weather, they swathe their head and shoulders in a Negadeh cloth. The malaiat, as this "comforter" is called, is made of thick cotton. The border, of the same material, has let

into it lines of strong crimson and yellow silk. It is of the pattern and quality of a coarse dark blue English duster, and the size and shape of a Scotch plaid. Very ugly, very stiff, ungraceful and uncomfortable, a good one costs 250 piastres (25*s.*), and is the pride of the Arab sailor's heart. The poorer men buy malaiats with only a strand or two of silk in them, or with none; but much silk or all cotton, the man so besuffocated swaggers along with an extra swagger.

Whilst the fellaheen worked, and our crew strutted off, we used to sit under our awning and look on at the crowd, ever changing, ever busy, and as unlike anything to be seen in the West as was the sky overhead, or the air we breathed. An Eastern scene has thrown on it a light that warms and mellows everything it touches. Poverty, and rags, and dirt, under Egypt's sun, are picturesque, not pitiable. There is no damp, no cold, to make the half-clothed urchins shiver; and lack of garments seems more an advantage than a want. After a time, rather long than short, our men, one by one, reappear. The breast of each man's gown, or gowns, is filled to repletion with his favourite dainties; and if he is rich, half-a-dozen sugar-canes lie on his shoulder. Last of all comes Girghis. The Faithful is in attendance upon him, and carries under his arm an immense goose, bought for 14 piastres; two wild ducks, for five piastres; one poor bird alive, with his wing broken; and the inevitable mutton, at four piastres

the pound. Then we have eggs, ten for a piastre; and cucumbers, broad-beans, and vegetable marrow, fill up the basket.

Leaving Sohag in the afternoon, we stopped to sleep a little above Gebel Aridi, where our boat, on the ascent, was so nearly capsized. There, too, was it that Ibrahim, tired of his first brief struggle for virtue, took the name of the Relapsed. There must have been something exciting in the locality. In passing the mountain on the next morning (March 8th) it again blew strong and squally. Ibrahim was mulish, and the next worst man in the ship became mutinous. Mohammed, the brother-in-law of the reis, was by nature idle, gluttonous, and a buffoon. Presuming on his connection with our skipper, he followed the natural bent of his disposition. Practical jokes, horse laughter, Arab shouts, and frying onions with grease in a tiny pan, were almost his sole occupations. Three days before his conduct had been grossly offensive; to-day his idleness and noise were so insupportable that I complained to the reis. Upon the old man's speaking to him, he burst into a frenzy of rage, and desired to be put ashore. An Arab is a born actor; the tragic manner with which he threw on and around him his gowns, thrust his left arm through the belt of his knife, seized his blunderbuss and sack of clothes, would have made his fortune at the Surrey Theatre. Upon us the result produced was great satisfaction. I ordered Abed to get the felucca, and asked Mohammed on which side of the river

he would like to be landed. The reis threw his arms around him, with entreaties that he would be quiet. The ruffian's answer was to endeavour, or more probably to pretend to endeavour, to strike the good-hearted old man; but when he saw the felucca come alongside, he began to lay aside his weapons and clothes again. I was then entreated to pardon him; he was sorry; he was a good fellow, only a little passionate, and his recent outbreak was only his play. Besides, his wages had been prepaid, and if I put him ashore the reis would be the loser. So for the old man's sake, and very much against our will, I committed the great folly of granting a pardon. It was the last straw, and our influence with the crew was broken by it.

A little later in the day we were hailed from a dahabeah not much more than half our own size. Some English acquaintances were on board who had come by rail to Minieh, and been tempted by the sight of this model of a Nile-boat to make the ascent in her to Luxor. Having tents with them, they landed and slept ashore each night. Our surprise at such a meeting was only less than our pleasure at getting news from home, and some Pall Mall Budgets. That night we slept at Abootig, and the next morning reached Sioot.

CHAPTER XX.

SIOOT TO CAIRO.

It was the 9th of March, and time to get further north perhaps to quit Egypt. .Although the north wind was almost daily blowing, and the days were not hot, whilst the nights were quite cool, musquitoes were reappearing, the flies had become a plague, and the fleas a pest. Shortly after our arrival, the dahabeah "Cerulean blue" came in from Luxor. The Englishman on board paid us a visit, and we discussed the late storm. Higher up the river than we were, he had not felt it nearly so severely But on the 10th Jan. of this season, his boat had been blown away by a similar though less heavy squall.

About midnight a gust of wind fell on the dahabeah, and the after mooring gave way. Her stern flew out, and the men rushed on shore to remedy the mishap. Scarcely had they done so, when another blast broke the moorings forward, and tore the ropes held by the men from their hands. When the boat was sent adrift, her mainsail got loose, and, fortunately, being old, was blown into pieces. Then the awning under which the men had been sleeping, was forced sideways, and under the pressure of this novel sail, the dahabeah heeled over till the water came pouring into her. The Englishman, with two men and a boy who were still on board, ran to the helm, and with great diffi-

culty got her before the wind. She then righted, and in a few minutes was driven high and dry on a sandbank.

The next morning her crew and reis rejoined her, but it was impossible to move her without the aid of some twenty-five or thirty men. Application for this assistance was made, and payment offered to the sheik of the neighbouring village, but it was granted only on compulsion. When sufficient force had been used to him, he went round the village with the reis and crew of the dahabeah, pointed to a man, and said, "take him." The man refused to follow until he received three or four cuts with a stick from the reis, then he fell in. This process of forcible enlistment was pursued with the first two or three men; after that, the already pressed fellaheen took sticks, and applying them freely and cordially to their fellows, saved the reis all further trouble.

On the 10th March we left Sioot, and dropped down to Benoub. A gentle breeze from the north cleared our deck of flies, and made life healthy and pleasant. So circuitous is this part of the Nile, that in one bend we had the wind dead ahead, and in the next we shook out our ballakoon and ran before it. At Benoub was the home of Girghis. We slept there; and though the khamsin was blowing the next morning—that favourable wind so rare to homeward-bound travellers, and so valuable, that every minute of it is precious,—he kept us waiting till 9 a.m. When he did return at last, he added to his misconduct by coming laden with presents. Good bread and

excellent fresh butter were very welcome, but he brought besides a one-year-old sheep, neither lamb nor mutton. The present was too valuable to be accepted, and yet consideration for Girghis's feelings forced us to accept it. The animal, too, was of a more than usually gregarious disposition, and kept up a continuous bleat, that made us long to turn it loose ashore. But Girghis had taught us to like him. An exception to Arab rule, his manners were bad and his honesty great, so we bore with the sheep for his sake. With the favourable breeze we ran down at a great pace, say five or six miles an hour, to Manfaloot. Here the river doubles on itself to a degree unusual even on the Nile. Our delay in the morning made itself felt throughout the day. We were always just too late. Three several times as we came to a bend running back to the south, the fitful breeze grew into a strong wind, and we had much difficulty in making a few hundred yards against its opposition. At the same time we had the mortification of seeing the boats just ahead, boats that had been almost in our company, but had turned the corner in time, sped along out of sight by the breeze that held us. These squalls increased in strength till Radouan declared it not safe to proceed. Gebel Abou Födhr was near, and though he stands on the east bank and the wind was from the south-west, so bad was his reputation, that our people were frightened to pass him. We persisted, however, as it was difficult to see how a mountain to leeward could be very dangerous.

By dusk it had fallen calm, and we had put many miles between us and the gebel. We were in our cabins at dinner, when the noise of a rush of wind overhead and loud Arab shrieks disturbed us. Almost before I could get on deck, the squall had passed, and I found the men rowing like mad to get to the windward shore. By the time we reached it, they had forgotten their fright, and as they were as anxious as we were to get on, we continued to creep along the bank. The heat, great all day, still continued, though it was now 8 p.m., and the weather was so unnatural, that remembering our Farshoot storm, I kept looking out for squalls. In about an hour I saw by the moonlight, a column of sand to windward, looking like the smoke rising from some immense bonfire. Radouan and the reis, however, declared that there was no sand hereabouts, it was all sugarcane. Five minutes afterwards there came a hot breath behind, like the blast from a furnace, and looking back we saw a perpendicular dust column crossing the river, 200 or 300 yards behind us. We had just time to run the boat round a small point and high upon a sloping bank, when the squall struck us. No harm was done, and we went to bed; but I was soon asked to allow the boat to be again started.

It was a lovely night; the breeze was fair and steady, so, anxious to get letters at Minieh, we consented. At midnight there was again a scene of confusion and shouting. Ibrahim was so terrified that he could make no answer, but "*Non sai io,*" to my inquiries, and I had to

get up and go on deck. I found that one of the same passing squalls had driven us aground in the centre of the river. On either side was a sandbank covered with water, and a heavy stream was pressing us further up the shoal we were on. The night was most uncanny to look at, and fearfully hot. Black clouds (clouds are portents on the Nile) covered up the north horizon, and a lurid light lit up the south-west. The men, frightened into activity, worked most vigorously; but before they could get us afloat, a heavy rush of wind was heard approaching, and the wash of the waves caused by its passage, sounded in the calm as if close to us. It passed, however, on the further shore, half a mile off, and the wave was the only effect from it that we felt. The moment it was over, the men jumped again into the water, and heaving and straining with frantic efforts, they forced the boat afloat. Then we made for the nearest bank, and moored safe and fast.

A rather particular, if not lengthy, account has been given of these squalls. They were so extraordinary in their suddenness, force, and narrowness of scope, that they made a great impression upon us. On each occasion there was nothing more, and sometimes much less, than a sudden strong wind at the part of the river we were on, but close to us passed by a most furious blast. The noise was unlike any wind noise ever heard in Europe; the water was white as I have seen it in a white squall in the Mediterranean; the sand, on one occasion, thick and round and perpendicular like a tower, at each time filled

to darkness the orbit of the squall, and this orbit was so small that we saw as it were round it. Behind and before and on either side we could see that there was a dead calm; then inside came a circle of strong wind, and inside again travelled across the landscape, a gust like the smoke just blown from the mouth of a cannon. Our position during the last one was so unpleasant, that C. had to get up and dress herself.

We were late the next morning in getting under weigh. Radouan had lost his road, and, as a sensible man, waited until a boat passed, to tell him how to get out of the labyrinth of shoals around us. Radouan had been well-taught that excellent rule, "Ask, if you don't know," and the result to us was, that we very rarely got aground. The khamsin still blowing, we ran rapidly by Beni Hassan, and were within a mile of Minieh, when a strong north wind reached us, and stopped our easy progress. We had already landed Abed, and sent him home to his wife; the boat was getting ready to send ashore for the letters we expected, when the wind shifted, and we were six hours and a half, making less than one and a half miles.

Such is Nile travelling, such perhaps is all travelling by water,—nay, all travelling whatever,—nay, life itself. All is going well, the start has been rapidly effected, all obstacles are overcome, the wind and stream are favourable; the miles are run easily by, already the goal is within reach; one has but to reach out the hand

and grasp the prize. When suddenly the wind, or the trusted friend turns against one; fortune fails, or health breaks down; and with the promised haven of rest in sight, there comes a painful struggle. Many a man, wearies and faints by the way before it is over, and happy is he for whom it ends successfully.

We found that the steamer, by which we intended to go to Constantinople, did not start as soon as expected, and as the quarter we had taken up under the pasha's house was clean, and comparatively free from flies, we remained at Minieh for a couple of days. Any dirty spot in Egypt, at this season of the year, is rendered unbearable by the flies; at the clean ones, there are not many more than may be found in a dirty town in a hot summer, in England. Minieh is a pretty place, and looks well to do, as, indeed, do most of the towns at this part of the river. Numbers of sugar factories were hard at work, others were building; the people seemed fully employed, healthy, well-dressed, and fed. Quantities of boats crowded the river bank, half a dozen steamers had just arrived, or were about to depart, and everything had a busy and prosperous appearance. Sugar was the cause of the stir. Sugar is the potent *elixir vitæ*, by which Egypt may recover her youth. The cane harvest was commencing when we passed up in December; it would be finished, we were told, in a fortnight. During these months the mills are unceasingly crushing the canes, and pressing out the juice. For the rest of the

year, sugar-making or sugar-growing fully employs the neighbouring population. There are the canes to be planted, tended, watered, and cut, and, wherever sugar is made, labour is in steadily increasing demand.

The next two days, the khamsin returned. We started on each of them, at about 9.30 a.m., and stopped at 6 p.m. The distance travelled was seventy-six miles, giving an average of about four and a half miles an hour. Such is the rate of speed obtained on the Nile under favourable circumstances. Quick passages may be made, but only by continuous travelling, and by taking advantage of every opportunity. But an average of two miles an hour going up, and of three miles an hour coming down, is as much as can be reckoned on, unless the voyage be turned into a race, and the caprices of the wind be obeyed by night and by day.

The heat during the last week had become excessive. The thermometer ranged during the day from 88° to 95°. We had become so accustomed, though not reconciled, to this high temperature, that we thought it cool when the thermometer stood at 87°, and I put on warmer clothes when it dropped to 80°. The weather, too, was treacherous and stormy. But where is it not so in the month of March? Shortly below Aboogirg, we came upon the scene of the accident to the "Cerulean blue," and there was still evidence to be seen of the strength of the gale that had blown, and weight of the rain that had fallen.

At one place, the river bank, here about twenty feet

high, had been cut through, and down to the level of the Nile bed. A gap of some sixty yards in width, marked the spot where a torrent had burst through the alluvial soil and forced its way into the river. The torrent bed, full of yellow sand and sandstone rocks, brought down from the mountains, contrasted strongly with the high perpendicular alluvial banks on either side; and a delta of the same yellow colour had been pushed far into the Nile itself. A few miles lower, was another similar, but smaller, dry watercourse. Looking, as we were doing, at the burning sand, from whence the water that cut these trenches must have flowed, it seemed almost impossible to believe they existed. What manner of rain must it have been, to pour such a stream from off the thirsty desert? How many inches of water would it take to fill to overflowing, and to overcome the absorbent power of a bed of sand, as fine as dust, and as many feet in depth as miles in extent?

Next lay a large stranded vessel, to testify to the strength of the gale. Dismantled, she was lying on a shoal, with the water flowing in and out of her. Further on, we came upon two more vessels, wrecked in the same storm. One was standing almost upright, her head resting on the bank against which she had been driven, whilst her stern had dropped with the shrinking waters to their present level. The other must have foundered in the squall, for though lying high and dry when we saw her, she was still half full of water.

Nile travelling, as the storms we have felt and the wrecks we have seen sufficiently prove, is not free from risk. The wind blows home, the boats are not too manageable, and by no means well-managed. There is little discipline, small skill, and no courage, to be found among the crews. The immense sail, the long yard, and the house on deck in which one lives, give great hold to the wind. A shoal or leeshore are always close, and under these circumstances it is quite possible to come to grief.

These signs of disaster and the threatening weather induced us to stop for the night under a well-sheltering bank at a village half of which had been already washed away, and of whose remaining moiety, part was falling. In the night we were repeatedly woke, by the heavy splash made by the poor people's cottage walls, as they tumbled into the undermining river. Strong gusts of wind, too, blew from all quarters on and over us, and the men were obliged several times to tighten or readjust our moorings, as the quarter from which we were threatened changed.

We tried the next morning to move, but were soon forced by the north wind to return. It was still hot, but the desert wind that caused the heat had been encountered and driven back by the sea-breeze, and the temperature steadily fell. The first few hours after the north wind springs up, hours more or less according to the distance one finds oneself up the river, and to the

duration of the previous heat, the cold sea-breeze itself blows hot. On this occasion, the first breath of the north wind reached us in the middle of the night; but the wind was not cool till late in the afternoon of the succeeding day. In two hours more it was cold, and evidently fresh from the Mediterranean. Just in the same way does the khamsin commence comparatively cool, and rise in temperature as long as it continues. The gale blew fiercely all day, the ascending boats rushed up before it. Their sails, reefed after the Arab fashion, were filled out balloon-like high in the air, and the slackened sheets were held each in the hands of half a dozen men. Clouds of dust were borne along, hiding everything from view; but it was wholesomely done by a fair honest breeze, and as the day went on, and the temperature decreased, we, well placed, sheltered from the wind, and lying behind a background of rich crops, that kept us free from sand, felt our spirits rise, and lungs play freely, in the invigorating air. So we spent the day with our farm on a mud terrace, cut in the bank, six to eight feet wide, and twenty yards long. Four turkeys, a dozen chickens, and Girghis's sheep, greatly enjoyed their liberty ashore, and the Habitual, assuming a new character for our amusement, became pathetic. He told me some lie, and I did not believe it. He then told me the truth, and I did not believe it. This was too much for him. It was seldom that he expended truth, unless under compulsion. To do so on the second time of asking, and then not to

be believed, was too hard. He almost cried, as he said, "*Il signor non credo io anche quando parlo bene.*"

It was 2 p.m. on the next day before the north wind moderated sufficiently to enable us to start, and at 7.30 we reached Benesoueff, a distance of six or seven miles. But our day's work was not over. The Benesoueff we left going up had a broad navigable river before it, and we anchored under the shade of its trees. Now a huge sandbank, many feet above the water level, and as many hundred yards in breadth, forbade approach to the town. As the situation was exposed, and the weather unsettled, we tried to drop to the foot of the shoals and reach the true bank. We asked our way from the sailors of a number of native lighter boats, but, in spite of their directions, we struck the ground almost immediately. The water was only just too thin for the dahabeah, and the stream, first sweeping her stern round, carried her broadside for more than fifty yards over the bank, grinding and scraping with a noise as of a rush of wind, and a rasping jar that shook every timber. At last we struck. The crew went overboard, and heaved and strained for three hours to force the boat over the shoal into the deeper water beyond. Every foot of progress was registered by a scrape. Now she stuck fast, now we dragged on a few yards, then hung again, and at last, with a long grind, found ourselves afloat. Uncomfortable as is sometimes going ashore in the Nile, and serious as may be the loss of time, there is no shock to be dreaded. The build of the dahabeahs,

and the softness of the bottom, combine to make running aground easy, and a tremor of the boat is felt rather than a blow.

On the 18th March we woke at Benesoueff to shudder at the greeting of an old acquaintance. A bright sun, bitter cold wind, a blue sky, with white woolpacks hurrying across it, their edges fretted by the strength of the breeze, made as complete a March day as can be seen in England. As we looked at it, shivered in it, and got hot in it, one was reminded of the days when fond hopes of spring salmon had been blighted by similar weather, or one's mouth, eyes, and nose had been filled by the grit of a London street; and it required the positive contradiction of the sun's position to make us believe that the wind was not in the east.

A few miles below Benesoueff we met a dahabeah, starting, late as it was, on her second trip. She carried flags of many nations, and travellers dressed in every colour. One was full-blown in red; his stockings were mauve, his knickerbockers magenta, a crimson sash in many folds encumbered his waist, and on his head was a scarlet fez. The tone of his complexion we could not see, for he was too much occupied in admiring his legs to lift his head; and of the rest of his dress, our eyes, dazzled by the general gorgeousness, refused to take in the details.

In going up we were much struck by the signs of age shown by the mountains. Coming down, below Bene-

soueff, these symptoms are still more noticeable. Battered as they are above, here they are absolutely worn out. At Abou Födhr the cliffs are still cliffs, upright and entire. The strata are thrown out in bold relief by the crumbling of the intervening softer layers, and though here and there broken and interrupted, can be distinctly traced running along the face of the mountain for miles. But opposite Minieh the rocks are more decrepit, and here are absolutely decayed. Their heads flattened, their faces without feature, their feet covered and surrounded by the debris that has fallen from above, the cliffs had deteriorated into mounds. We had remarked, too, how much prettier the scenery appeared to us when coming down than in ascending the river. So it was above, and so it was no longer. The Nile, shrunk among sandbanks, had lost the beauty inherent to it by virtue of its size and volume. The banks, grown up as the water had receded, shut out such view of the country as was before exhibited, and in the part we now found ourselves the river resembled a muddy estuary rather than the Nile. But the Nile changes with the day. The beauty of Egypt is colour, and her colouring is exquisite. Take away the light and shade, the yellows, greens, and reds peculiar to it, and the Nile becomes a muddy river, the banks ugly, the hills puny, and the desert a waste of sand. But let the sun shine out with its accustomed brilliancy, and the river is a sheet of silver; the banks, a frame one overlooks; the hills grow into mountains, and the yellow turns to gold.

It was spring time. The birds knew it, and made the most it. The wagtails had gone; but that cosmopolitan, whom we are apt to call the London sparrow, hopped about, and at one time we had eight or ten on our deck, repeating that they were well aware of the season, till the energy of their assertions forced them to sit in the heat with their beaks gaping. A pair of doves took possession of the rigging, and chased each other with cooing and wooing till getting in our cabin, as we sat at breakfast, they were frightened at their own impudence. And another sign of the times was seen in the departure of the "families" of the Cairene pashas on their annual trip up Nile.

The great men's wives apparently require change of air in spring, for we met about this time several families on the river. There was the procession of three or four steamers, each towing dahabeahs, covered with guards and flags. The whole turn out was most magnificent, and at the same time dull, severe, and proper. But very amusing was the family of a mudir. A single dahabeah contained it, but with such difficulty that the decks were covered with women and children, and the cabins were so crowded, that a beauty, more or less fat, more or less old, but all more than less painted, was bursting full-blown out of every window. Dressed as they would be at home, with their faces and throats uncovered, we had, as we passed close by, an uncommon opportunity of seeing a harem. One strikingly pretty woman wore a most gorgeous dress of scarlet and gold, another had a very pretty

gown of red and white stripes; all ate, all talked, all laughed, and there was a general rush to look at C.

So great was the attraction of a European woman that the younger ones seemed for a moment to forget their sweetmeats, and one older lady even stopped in the peeling of a banana. The eunuch in charge was occupied, as we came up, in what appeared to me to be a flirtation in the stern cabin, but the general silence, the hushed voices, and non-cracking of nuts, recalled him to a sense of the situation. He made some gentle remonstrance at the small care shown by the family in the concealment of their charms; at which the oldest and plainest drew a veil over her face, but the others plainly said "bother," and we looked at each other with mutual gratification until the wind and stream separated us. It is my belief that the members of a family never cease eating something, unless they are better employed; and how can this often be in a life spent without books, music, or society, and with a single old gentleman for all their amusement? No wonder that each summer adds to their roundness of shape, and that the faces we saw were not intellectual. Western fashions are finding their way east, and, as we were told, the harem prejudices were now much weakened. Instances were given me, truly or no, who can say? of Europeans having been invited to smoke their pipes and drink their coffee with the family of a radical pasha; and in Cairo C. saw several broughams containing the khedive's wives, in dresses not very unsuit-

able for a Buckingham Palace drawing-room. Some gauze was worn, it is true, but it was a highly liberal gauze, and the effect was more charming than conservative.

We stopped at Kafr el Aiat at sundown, and were almost betrayed into laughing at the scene we saw acted on the beach. A man, evidently of position and sanctity, hurried down to say his evening prayer. As he reached the shore, his servants quickly took off their upper gowns and laid them on the ground. Walking over them, he spread his own in front. Then standing on it, he lifted up his hands, and began silently to pray. His servants ranged themselves in line behind him, and were joined by six or eight other people who had been loitering about. As the great man did, so did they. Presently he knelt, and bending forward, touched the ground with his forehead—so did they. Again and again he repeated the same genuflection; each time touching the earth with his forehead, and coming to recover upon his heels. His every motion was followed by the row behind, as if they had been so many automatons, and the effect of the dozen or two of turbaned heads popping up and down from as many pair of feet fixed to one spot, was ludicrous in the extreme.

We had always greatly admired the manner in which these people pray. Though the posture and gestures may seem exaggerated, and even ridiculous, in such a case as I have been describing, they are, when simply employed, most reverent; and, as a rule, the Arab

prays with an apparent forgetfulness of self, and an absence of either false shame at being seen praying, or of pretension of praying, that might be well imitated in more enlightened countries. The men pray as if it were a matter of course that every one should pray; and as if when doing so, they were totally absorbed. There is no doubt much of manner in this. The prayers are merely repetitions with set gestures; and like all repetitions with prescribed actions, the whole has a tendency to become a matter of form. But the form is striking, and none the less good, that Radouan, our strictest Mussulman, will stop in his prayers to give a necessary order, or that the holy man to-night continued kneeling with his head erect for at least five minutes, when it should have been on the ground, in order that he might indulge himself with a good stare at us. As he did, his followers did: when he had seen enough, so had they.

I have not unfrequently heard people wonder at the success and duration of Islamism, but there is nothing surprising in either. The religion is exactly suited to the people who profess it. It befits their ignorance, tempts their sensuality, and its observances are congenial to the climate in which they live. If for one quality only, a Mussulman is a pleasanter companion in a Mussulman or hot country, than the professor of any other religion. He is clean, and the more religious he is, the greater is his cleanliness. Radouan and his clothes are as white and well-washed as it is possible for clothes and

an Arab to be. Ibrahim, two days after he came to me, asked leave to go and be bled. I asked why; and he replied that at that time of year it was good to have blood taken. Besides his skin itched. I forbad the doctor, and prescribed a daily bath, with a plentiful application of yellow soap. The remedy was successful; but it was needed because Ibrahim was a Copt.

Our last day in Upper Egypt was a charming one. There was a gentle southerly air, cool after the norther we had lately suffered; but cool with the balmy softness peculiar to desert air. The sun shone out with Egyptian brilliancy, making deep the shadows and bright the light. At Chobac we passed the paradise of our ascent, but a glimpse even into the promised land was denied us. The six or eight feet, or perhaps more, that the Nile had fallen, had dropped us so far below the bank, that the line of our sight only took in the upper half of the palms standing a little back, and the tops of those 100 yards inland. Perhaps it was as well. The 800 miles we had come north had taken something from the light and colour, we, in going up, thought not to be surpassed, and the palm-tree here is not the palm of the south. With a bark, if their skin is to be called bark, hard, dark, and strongly resembling the outside of a Scotch fir-cone, they stand erect and stiff, singly too, or in rows, as if planted rather than nature-sown. The heads, in keeping with the trunks, have branches shorter, squatter, stiffer, and lack the luxuriant wavy bending grace of the

southern tree. Here, too, they are what an M.F.H. would call sizeable, a quality which adds much to their plantation appearance.

The trees we had grown to admire till we thought them the most lovely in the world, were very different. Scattered about, here and there, singly or in groups; now one, now ten, now twenty, springing from the parent tree, of all ages, of all sizes, bending in all directions, and swaying with the breeze like the fronds of a fern, they were as natural, as little stiff, and as graceful, as trees well could be. There was immense variety in their position too. They grew out of the green crop, and close by, from the bright red sand. A solitary tree stood by itself, or perhaps a dozen, or a whole grove of them, where at one part the eye glanced through the stems on to the desert beyond, at another rested on mimosas and nabuks, or occasionally on oranges or lemons, that closed the vistas, and bounded the views. Or still more beautiful, the palms grew in a thick wood of trees of every age, from the babies two or three feet high, sprouting like gigantic pineapples, to the monster tall as "the mast of some high amiral."

The trees, when we came into Egypt, were in fruit,—their handsomest season. They were now in flower, and we were told that it is the custom of the peasants to shake the dust from the flower of the male tree over the blossom of the female, and that without this there would be no fruit. The male tree is much the least common, and is fruitless.

Below Chobac is Bedreshayn, where antiquaries, and men in health stop as the nearest point to Memphis. Between these two villages there is a lovely view for all. A reach, broad and long, runs down to Toorah, with its quarries and forests of masts. Above and behind Toorah stand some large government buildings, which show with great effect from the commanding position they have taken at the extremity riverwards of the Toorah Massarah hills. On the east lies the desert. On the west, a sloping green bank, broken here and there by large woods of palms. Behind these again, visible between or over them, stand the great Pyramids and the less imposing ones of Sakarah, Memphis, and the Colossus. At the foot of the reach, Cairo suddenly comes into view. The capital of Egypt is seated like a bird on a hill, the whole of which it covers with outspread wings. The face of the mount now presented to us was a sheer abrupt descent. The buildings nestle to the very verge of the precipice; below, no foot could rest, and there is nothing to detract from the boldness with which the city has, as it were, taken its perch. High above all stretches upwards the citadel, with the dome and minarets of its magnificent mosque. The grand site has been most happily occupied, and suddenly seen as the city was by us, with the last rays of the evening light flitting over the buildings, and every line of the architecture clearly and sharply defined against the darkening sky, it appeared more like a dream of fairyland, or a scene in a

play, or a fiction of Turner's, than a real and living town.

In addition also to the perfection of its own site, Cairo possesses, with London, with Paris, Vienna, and many a capital, the advantage of being placed amid some of the prettiest scenery in the country over which it rules, and the approach to it from below, is almost as striking as the one I have tried to describe.

Reaching old Cairo some three miles above Boolak, we came upon the mouth of a tempting-looking canal. So at least we called the small arm of the river that divides the island of Roda from the mainland, the entrance reminding us for a moment of the Grand Canal of Venice. It seemed, however, worth exploring, and as we were too late for letters at Cairo, we indulged our whim, and, contrary to all custom, turned into it for the night. Several large and handsome houses, the property of high officers of State, stand upon the banks, and the well-kept gardens belonging to them, as well as the wilder ones of the smaller villas, were filled with orange, lemon, and jasmin trees, that grew like weeds, and were now white with flower. So overpowering was the fragrance of these rather faint-smelling blossoms, that we were obliged to change the place we first stopped at for another with more fresh air and less scent. The morrow proved how good it is to yield to one's inclinations. Beautiful as the evening had been, it began to blow in the night, and by daybreak we had a full gale from the

south. The wind continued in such force for three days, that we remained where we were, congratulating ourselves that our discomfort was not worse. The heat was great, and the clouds of dust so thick, that for two days the sun was never seen. The dust-charged atmosphere was very distressing, both to eyes and lungs. But in the canal, we had at least the advantage of smooth water. There were laid up around us a number of dahabeahs, and amongst them were several of medium and of small dimensions, so that the canal would probably repay a visit from any one about to hire a boat, and who did not leave the selection of it entirely to his dragoman.

On the morning of the 24th March, we got again under weigh. We had heard that the pasha had, since our departure from Cairo, thrown a bridge of boats across the river from Boolak to his palace at Gezereh. Various reasons were assigned for the enterprise. Some declared that the khedive had merely intended by it to facilitate the access of the distinguished guests entertained on the occasion of one of the late balls. Others said that he was desirous of saving himself trouble in crossing, or perhaps hoped by its means to escape drowning at the hands of his boatmen, suspected, in common with the rest of his subjects, of not being too fond of him. But no one thought it possible that he could have been actuated by any desire for the good of the country.

Our way taking us through the bridge, we made inquiries as to the hours of its opening, and in accordance

with the information we received, we dropped down to it before 9 a.m. The morning was a calm and lovely one; the river crowded with craft of all builds and sizes. There stretched the bridge before us; no moderate structure, an example of the wise economy that proportions expenditure to requirement, such as would have suited a corresponding amount of traffic in Europe, but proclaiming an union of Eastern magnificence with Western practical science in the macadam of its road and solidity of construction. But alas for us, and ten times alas for the commerce of Egypt, the management of the bridge when built, is essentially Eastern. It was closed when we reached it, and we took up a position among such a crowd of boats waiting, like us, to pass, that it was with much difficulty we could find room to push our bow to shore, and so we waited. Cairo is not Coblentz or Cologne. The readiness with which the Rhine bridges are worked (and the detention of the land or water traffic is reduced by good management to a minimum), is fully equalled on the Nile by the inertness and misconduct of the Egyptian officials. In vain we sent again and again to the kaftân of the bridge. Our impatience and the loss of time endured by the native boats were to him matters of equal unimportance. At last we heard that it did not please him to open the bridge that day, and the only favour granted to our foreign extraction and perseverance, was a promise that if one of the pasha's steamers passed through, we should be allowed to follow her. No such steamer came; the

kaftân, as good as his word, did not open the bridge, and we remained where we were.

The day was not, however, altogether without incident. As I lay on the deck watching for the pasha, who would not come, I heard some loud screams below me. Hobbling quickly down the companion, I looked into the cabin and saw—a drawer half pulled out, a quantity of linen on the floor, C. standing on a divan, her cheeks very red, her eyes very open, and with much regard for her petticoats, holding them well out of danger. The Faithful was on the floor with a huge rat, held by the nape of the neck, in his hand, and the state of his thumb showed that the seizure had been fiercely resisted. It turned out that C. had been taking something out of a drawer, and as she did so, the father of a rat family jumped into her lap, and became therein entangled. The Faithful, ever ready, rushed to the rescue, chased the aggressor into a corner, and caught it as described. But what was to be done with it? The rat's head and Abed's thumb were so close, that one could not be hit without offence to the other. To throw the rat overboard would be to grant a full pardon; and this, not even C. would hear of. For once, the reis was the readiest. Pushing down Abed's hand, he put his bare foot on the rat's head, and stamped the animal's life out as easily as I have seen him extinguish a vesuvian or piece of live charcoal that had dropped on the deck. The social position we had assigned by guess to the victim, was

positively established a few days afterwards. On the drawer being again opened, there was seen curled up in a nice little hole carefully made in some soft Turkish towels, his interesting newly-born posthumous family.

Shortly after this episode, the sound of a tomtom summoned us on deck to look at the procession of an Arab wedding. Procession is a badly chosen word, conveying as it does an idea of some sort of order and some sort of progress. In this case there was the least possible amount of either. A number of children led the line, clad in loose red and white or other gay coloured gowns, and reminded us strongly of Roman Catholic "*enfants de chœur.*" A crowd of men swept the way with palm branches, and a number of women who would be best described as walking bundles of clothes, so manifold were their garments, hustled round a canopy under which stood the bride. This covering was made of some gaudy yellow and red stuff, with a tawdry fringe, supported by four carved and gilded poles; and the bride, as she stood under it, covered with a thick white veil, and adorned by dozens of strings of gold coins which hung from her head to her waist, exactly resembled at the short distance we were from her an effigy of the Virgin. The path along which the crowd was making its way, ran along the top of a narrow bank, and the line, perforce lengthened out, took at least an hour to pass us. Sick were we of the tomtom before it had done so, and still more sick of the wedding before it was over. At intervals during all the day and through

the night, the monotonous drum broke in upon us again and again, accompanied by the screams of Arabs, and the discharge of guns.

In the afternoon, a pretty, nice-looking fellaheen woman came to fill her water-jar at our side. C. asked her on board, the better to buy a handsome silver bracelet she had on, and we found her full of fun, ready with her questions, and free with comments on all she saw and heard. Equally at home in her wit and her language, she had the best of our encounter, and her parting shot was a strong recommendation to me that I should increase my "family," and an assurance to C. that she would never be dull if she only had a sister.

CHAPTER XXI.

CAIRO TO ALEXANDRIA.

THE bridge was not opened till the next morning at 10, and curious indeed was the scene. Any one possessed of a lively imagination, and an acquaintance with Temple Bar on a summer's afternoon, might conceive some idea of it. Let him widen the bar to 50 feet, and make of each curb-stone a huge iron barge. Then transform every omnibus, cab, cart, or carriage, into an Arab craft, with even more dissimilarity in size and shape. Of every driver, or cad, make an Arab boatman, with Arab voice and Arab want of skill. The khedive's kawasses naturally replace the policemen, and are quite as well obeyed as Division A. Under their orders the fearful confusion of the first rush is soon calmed into something like order. Precedence is given to the boats coming down, and with much hauling of ropes, pulling of oars, grinding of bulwarks, we, in company with a hundred others, get crushed through the gap in the bridge.

We stopped immediately below, to recover our breath and watch the struggles of those who had still to pass. Our amusement, however, if amusement it could be called, did not last long. Hardly were we made fast when the kaftân, tired of the noise, or wanting to go home to his breakfast, or desirous of showing his authority, or for

some reason equally valid in Egypt, ordered the bridge to be closed. There was waiting to pass over it at the time one single-horse brougham, six donkeys, and five camels laden with grass. There were waiting to go through it at least three or four score of merchant boats.

A very short stay in Egypt so accustoms one to the oppression habitually exercised by Egyptian officials in their dealings with the fellaheen, that it scarcely surprises one that delay, as great as it is needless and senseless, should be imposed on boats passing the other impediments on the river, in the shape of locks and bridges. But it is strange that at Cairo, under the very eyes of the government, such short-sighted and mischievous misconduct should be permitted. The Nile, as everyone knows, is the highroad of Egypt. On it the whole commerce of the country is carried, and, as probably everyone out of Egypt does not know, the larger portion of the gains of this commerce goes into the pocket of the khedive. Everything is taxed, the boats, the cordage, the cargo, the very men who navigate them. These boats and men, therefore, work for the pasha when working for themselves; and yet his servants are allowed, without reason or cause, to tax them in their time, and at their pleasure or caprice to stop their labour. Can anything more idiotic be conceived, than the needless impeding of the work of those who are working for you? Fancy a sterile queen bee sitting at home, and causing the door of the hive to be plugged up; and this is precisely what

is done by the paternal and loan-raising government of Egypt.

Dropping down with the stream, we passed a fleet of large and handsome dahabeahs, lying at anchor for the summer. Some were in the charge of caretakers, their cabins closed, venetian blinds shut, and side awnings down. Others were inhabited by their Egyptian owners. One was pointed out as the property of a Cairene lady who letting it in the winter, used it in the summer as a villa.

With some difficulty we found a mooring place at Ramleh, where we remained for the arrangement of our business at Cairo.

In the evening, a French resident merchant dined with us; and a native effendi, who was a boatbuilder and dahabeah owner by trade, paid us a visit. He came to see the *Lotus* with a view to purchase, but of course, with Arab truth, declared his purpose to be to pay us a visit. "All he cared for, all he wanted, was to see me well, and to make friends. Friends," he said, "are gold. Money I can always make; but if you will be my friends, and you, sir, will get well, that is all I care. Egypt must do you good. Was I not ill in it, and did I not go away to your country, and come back sound? You shall come again, sir, and have all my boats for nothing, so that you will oblige me by getting well."

During the summer the effendi and his family, a numerous one we were told, live on board his different dahabeahs. They had already moved into them, and

many and pressing were the invitations given to us to come and see their home. "Would we dine with him? He did not live like the Arabs, but was an educated man. His wives sat at table with him, and should sit at table with us." Our French friend said, "What! the last one, the Circassian, will she be at table?" At this the effendi grew angry. "Circassian there was none; his brother had died, and he had taken his brother's wives; was not that good?" When out visiting he was as much above prejudice as he represented himself to be at home, and he was equally liberal with the Bordeaux, and abuse of Ramadan. "Did he keep it? yes, before the Arabs, the pigs! And after eating by day-time, out of their sight, he wiped his mouth so [with the sleeve of his coat], and then who knew?" Englishmen never say so much evil in public of their government, or of "the system," nor do Italians, or even Irishmen, ever so heartily abuse in private each themselves, as an Arab does an Arab. The very word Arab is used amongst them as a term of contempt.

Our business completed, we were impatient to leave the noisy Ramleh, but the crew were equally anxious to pass another night at Cairo. Various expedients to detain us were therefore resorted to, and they resulted in our getting under weigh at 3 p.m., and leaving the absent negro, Said, behind us. Paddling slowly down in a dead calm, we that evening reached the Fumelbach, as the turnpike gate is called which stretches across the Nile,

some fifteen miles below Cairo. This barrage, as the guide books style it, was erected as they tell us with a view to the construction of a system of irrigation works for the improvement of the Delta; but as the boatmen aver, for the purpose of enabling toll to be levied on the boats passing through it. Certain is it that that is the only object which it now serves, unless impeding the navigation can be also called one. The barrage is a weir whose design might have been borrowed from the pictures of a fortified wall in an illustrated Froissart. A long line of brickwork spans the river, several hundred yards in breadth, and presents to view an infinity of small arches and turrets. Each arch is flanked and ornamented by two turrets, and closed by a sluice gate. Through these gates the water apparently finds its way at will, for there was not more than a few inches difference in the level above and below the river when we passed it. On either side, next the bank, is a pair of look-out towers, with proportions considerable as compared with the turrets. Between these towers is a lock, through which the boats are passed and fleeced. Across the water-gates are moveable bridges, giving access to a road that runs over the whole structure, and completing the medieval appearance of this costly, ugly, and worse than useless toll-bar.

Stopping above it at night, in order that we might pass through whenever it should be opened the next morning, and knowing our Egypt better than when we

entered it, we had instructed the reis to give the officials in charge such a backshish as might ensure permission to pass without loss of time. This I was assured had been done, and as our truant boatman had also caught us up, we were surprised to find ourselves at 10 a.m. still in the lock. At last it occurred to me that though the reis declared the backshish to have been given, it was quite possible that in whole or in part it had stuck in his pocket. So calling him, I said that we had already been detained too long, and that for every additional half-hour of detention five francs should be deducted from the backshish I intended to give him on our arrival at Alexandria. The effect of this announcement was magical. Were we in the land of Morgiana, "Open Sesame" could scarcely have done its work quicker. In a moment the old man's active legs had carried him by way of the rigging out on to the coping-stone of the lock, ten feet above us. In another minute the kaftân was taken aside, the necessary order from him was given, the gates were opened, and we were free.

From this point our journey was made dull by the illness of C. Perfectly well at Cairo, she woke at the Fumelbach in a high fever and severe pain. Chance inquiries had told us that there was no doctor to be depended on at Cairo, and our best course, as the wind was fair, was to race on to Alexandria, trusting till then to our own skill. Fortunately this was sufficient, and before we reached a doctor we had no need of one. But the pleasure of our

trip was over, and the last lingering delusions,—fruits of Lady Duff Gordon's Letters,—on the amiability of Arab character, that our other experiences had not dispelled, were now destroyed. We had three days' most favourable weather. The wind was with us or there was none; and, with the least exertion, a remarkably quick passage might have been made. The men knew how anxious I was to get to Alexandria, and the cause of my anxiety. There was not one of them who had not, for some reason or other, been impelled to protest his readiness to do anything in the world for "the sittee," as C. was entitled, but there were only two who would even do their common duty when the occasion demanded it and called for something more.

Acting as doctor and nurse, I was necessarily a great deal in the cabins. Whenever I was so, not a stroke of work was done. The oars were dipped with a splash and taken out again. The men roared out improvised songs, and the impatience of the hawager was a point that served to season every joke, and never ceased to produce fits of laughter. Even when I was on deck a constant sham was kept up, and I had the greatest difficulty to get any work out of the worse than lazy rascals.

But the Nile stream is a good friend, and in two days we reached Kafr é Zayát. I had timed our arrival, as at the Fumelbach, so as to be there in the early morning. We remembered the delay suffered at the railway bridge on our up-voyage, and determined, if the bridge were

opened at all during the day, to be at the opening. Nevertheless, we did not escape a detention, which though much less in time, was even more irritating and uncalled-for.

In the high Nile all but quite small boats must pass through the bridge, one arch of which is swung aside to clear a passage. But the water had now greatly fallen, and judging by my eye, I thought when I came on deck that we could pass or nearly so underneath. The reis was absent. He had gone ashore to pay the toll, and give such backshish as would prevent any needless delay. So, calling Radouan, I asked if we could not go under the bridge. "No," said he; "the reis had already measured the height of the arch with a string, and there was not room." There was nothing, then, for it but to wait. At 10 a.m. the reis returned. He had seen the kaftân, and paid the toll, but the bridge would not be opened till the afternoon.

Experience had long taught us that the afternoon in Arabic is the equivalent of an English to-morrow, that to-morrow which never comes, and that if it meant anything more it was "at such a time as should please the officials." But experience had also taught us never to believe anything we heard, and so I asked the reis when he had measured the height of the arch. "When! not at all." Radouan had simply told a lie, as being more easy than to walk 100 yards and take a measurement. The reis, always ready to do any work himself, at once took

string and stone, measured the height of our mast from the water, ran like a boy of fourteen to the bridge, measured that, and returned to show that we could go under, and had nearly a foot to spare. So we had lost two or three hours by Radouan's gratuitous invention.

A start was immediately ordered, but notwithstanding that the toll had been paid, the backshish given, and we had nothing to do but float under the bridge, this could not be done without the kaftân's permit. Irritated as I was, and anxious to get forward, we were still determined if possible to have right on our side, and to obey the law, however senseless it seemed. So before breaking it we sent a letter to the traffic manager of the railway, who has the supreme control of the bridge, asking for a permit, and explaining the urgency of our case. The great man obligingly gave the required firman at once, and we dropped under the obstacle that was no obstacle, and had yet so vexatiously detained us all the morning. I was too busy with our own affairs to observe how many boats were waiting above bridge for leave to pass it, but once through it there was time to look about, and I counted fifty-five moored to the banks below. Fully half of them were no larger than our own boat, and could have passed as we did under the arch. They did not dare to do so.

Some of their crews told us, in answer to inquiries I made as we floated by, that they had been waiting since the yesterday's early morning. They had paid for the opening of a bridge they could have gone under when shut, but

they had not got their firman, and without it they dared not move. Is there any other land where permission would be given to a railway company to build a bridge across a navigable river, and to levy a toll for passing through or under it on the boats whose carrying trade it was endeavouring to supersede or compete with? Competition was at one time in England considered to confer a *locus standi* for the opposition by a rival of a railway bill before parliament. But imagine such a reason being held to justify the taxation by the new company of the means of trade hitherto enjoyed by the public.

It is doubtful policy of the khedive to deprive his hard-working and money-for-him-getting subjects of the right of way by which they make it; a right of way made sacred by tens of centuries of prescription. It is, to say the least of it, an arbitrary measure to obstruct the exercise of such a right, and scant justice to burden with the heavy cost of the obstruction the boatmen who lose by it, instead of the company for whose profit it was built. Bad, too, it must be owned, is the management which detains for days together the larger vessels, whose passage through the bridge requires that it should be opened. But what can be said of the further abuse of power which taxes and detains the smaller boats that could pass without any such derangement of the competing line of rail? Fancy the Metropolitan Railway having and exercising the power to levy a heavy toll on the Citizen steamers, the coal barges and wherries of the

Thames; and, further, to detain them for two or three days at Hungerford Bridge. Yet this is exactly what is done in Egypt, under the authority of the khedive, whom we are all taught in England to regard as an enlightened ruler, anxious above all things to develope the resources of the country he governs.

It was nearly 1 p.m. before we cleared Kafr é Zayát; but the breeze, though light, was fair, and we hoped quickly to complete our journey. The men, however, continued their misconduct, and we dawdled along at the rate of speed we were carried by the gentle air and stream. To make up for time lost by day, I would not permit any stop by night; and the next morning we turned out of the Nile at Atfeh.

We were only detained two or three hours at the lock, and at 10 a.m. had passed into the canal. How necessary it is to compare things with their surroundings if we desire to judge them fairly! The conduct of public men in past centuries is not to be measured by the standard of morality now existing; nor, to compare small things with great, can time in Egypt be rated at the value given to it in England. Waiting three-quarters of an hour at Sunbury Lock would be an unheard-of hardship. Passing through the lock at Atfeh with a loss of only three hours was, to us, a matter of congratulation.

The morning was calm, but we were within 40 miles of Alexandria. Alexandria meant backshish. It was, therefore, no longer safe to behave ill; and we had

scarcely passed the lock-gates before our crew—yesterday so unwilling, to-day most zealous—leapt ashore with the tow-rope, as if to work was the joy of their lives, and to please us the only desire of their hearts. Greater children than the Egyptian Arabs never lived. They will continuously shirk all duty, evade or disobey orders, and misconduct themselves as much as they dare for days together. Their whole craft and energy will be devoted to the not doing, in such a way as to escape actual punishment, that which they ought to do. Then, wanting something, they will strive as hard for a dozen hours to please as they have before to render themselves disagreeable, and they expect that the bad conduct will be immediately overlooked in the good. Perhaps all this is natural, for they themselves seem absolutely without malice, or even the power of resentment. Their passion is strong, but most evanescent. In their dealings with us, the infliction of punishment seemed to produce not only submission, but affection; and any quarrels that arose among them were entirely forgotten on the instant they were appeased.

It was impossible really to like people whose characters were so weak, so tricky, and so false; men so little amiable one to the other, so without sympathy and harsh to each others' misfortunes. And yet one could not part angrily with those whose faults seem rather to be the result of continuous tyranny and misgovernment than fairly attributable to their nature. It may well be that the

hardness with which they regard the mischances of others is the consequence of familiarity with suffering; and that the spirit of intrigue, so opposed to our English tastes, has been engendered by constant oppression. We came amongst them expecting to find a highly-endowed, if ignorant, race; we left them with a knowledge that they were full of faults, and yet pleasant to live with. And I believe that the greater part of the discomforts we endured at their hands, was the consequence of ill-judged actions of good nature. The stick is a lever abhorrent to English ideas. There would never be any need of it in Egypt if strict discipline were enforced, improper behaviour invariably punished, and injudicious kindness avoided. But no positive offence should be suffered to pass unnoticed, no command once given should be allowed to fall to the ground, and no indulgence should be granted that the customs of the country do not authorise.

We were doomed to encounter in the Mahmoodéëh canal yet another of the violent gales for which the season had been so remarkable. It met us full in the teeth; and if it was difficult to keep our hold to the bank, in spite of moorings and anchor, it was impossible for Girghis to give us any dinner.

The next day it blew almost equally hard, and we saw a market held on the bank under difficulties. But on the day after, we passed the spot from whence we started, and were towed between the villas and their gardens

right into Alexandria. Yet another day or two found us on the way to Constantinople.

Our opinions of the attractions offered by a Nile voyage to either invalid or tourist, as well as of the drawbacks to be encountered, and the price to be paid in money and trouble, have been so fully expressed in the course of these pages, that there seems small scope for last words. But I cannot make an end without saying once more that the climate of Upper Egypt, in the winter, is as enjoyable as I believe any on earth can be; that of the monotony experienced by some travellers, we found none; and that to a sick man, the life led on the Nile, and which I have endeavoured to describe, is as agreeable as it is health-giving. To be absolutely free from any care, but that perversely carried with you; to be absent from the hurry, bustle, and activity of home daily life, with enough to occupy and distract, and nothing to fatigue the brain; with air as balmy as it is soft, appetite giving and sleep compelling; with sun to warm by day, and freshness by night to string and brace the nerves; with all temptation to live in the open air, and cabins to retire to, literally under the foot, whenever rest or quiet be desired —every aid is given to wearied nature striving to recover her lost powers. And of all the many places to which, seeking for health, I have been sent by doctors, by friends recommended, or by fancy prompted, I know of none to be compared to the Nile, either for the enjoyment it affords, or the chances of recovery it offers.

It may be as well, too, to add as proof, that Nile travelling is within the reach of men of moderate means; that the whole cost of our expedition from Cairo to Wadi Halfeh and back was only £60 per month. This sum included £40 for the hire of the *Lotus*, the wages of our servants, the cost of the provisions sent from England, backshish given to the crew, and every incidental expense. The amount was ridiculously small as compared with the ordinary rate of expenditure in a dahabeah; but then we ventured on "the Nile without a Dragoman."

THE END.

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